

## Fostering Learning: Creating Transparency; 5 Years of DEval 2012 - 2017

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# Fostering learning. Creating transparency.

5 years of DEval 2012 – 2017



**DEval**

GERMAN  
INSTITUTE FOR  
DEVELOPMENT  
EVALUATION



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**DEval**  
GERMAN  
INSTITUTE FOR  
DEVELOPMENT  
EVALUATION



**Fostering  
learning.  
Creating  
transparency.**

5 years of DEval 2012 – 2017

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## Foreword

### Dear reader,

For many years, development cooperation was consigned to the sidelines of German foreign affairs. This is no longer so, however. Today, refugee crises, violent conflicts, international terrorism and global degradation of our natural resources are testament to the direct significance of development problems for our society. It therefore comes as no surprise that awareness of development issues has increased within society as a whole in recent years. This is also linked to the fact that adequate contributions to development by Germany and other European countries are not only altruistic convictions that are geared towards promoting sustainable development elsewhere, they are also consistent with a philosophy of enlightened self-interest.

At the same time, designing development cooperation interventions that are both effective and sustainable poses a major challenge, if we are to ensure that we address not just the symptoms of development problems but the root causes too. Significant obstacles are posed by political framework conditions in many developing countries, tensions or even contradictions in a highly complex system that incorporates the social, economic, environmental and political objectives of cooperation and – last but not least – deficiencies in learning and coordination within and between development organisations.

Despite these difficulties, there is no reason to believe that development cooperation cannot be designed and implemented effectively. The evaluation of development interventions plays a key role in this context, providing an instrument to strengthen democratic accountability but also to promote learning processes. These functions turn scientifically sound evaluations into highly relevant practical tools.

Against this background, the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), which was established in 2012, has dedicated itself to providing scientifically sound and practically relevant evaluations. In many respects, DEval is an institutional innovation. Although the evaluation of development interventions is firmly anchored in most donor countries, as an independent institute that has a specific government mandate to carry out strategically relevant evaluations, DEval has entered uncharted territory at an international level too. At DEval, we also explore the links between different fields of activity – our core business of evaluation is complemented by the development of methods and standards and the strengthening of evaluation capacities in partner countries. The fact that our evaluation work is explicitly based on scientific standards cannot be taken for granted either. Indeed, it demonstrates our high quality standards and reflects the increased requirements that the knowledge generated by evaluations must meet.



Professor Jörg Faust  
Director of DEval

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To mark our fifth anniversary, this report aims to present DEval and the special institutional role it plays to a wider audience. In addition to providing information on its establishment, we also want to show how DEval works on fulfilling its institutional purpose, mainly by drawing on examples from our evaluations. Fostering learning, creating transparency – based on these core functions of evaluation, the report aims to illustrate how DEval fulfils its role within development cooperation.

DEval creates research-based knowledge to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of development cooperation. In this way, our institute triggers learning processes among policy-makers and development cooperation practitioners. It also strengthens transparency and democratic accountability in German development cooperation. DEval aims to transfer the knowledge acquired to partner countries and within Germany and forges networks with other evaluation and development cooperation actors. By fulfilling the above-mentioned evaluation functions, the institute therefore contributes to an increase in the overall legitimacy of development cooperation.

This is an ambitious task as we constantly have to balance several tensions in our work. These tensions include taking on board consultation inputs from stakeholders while at the same time retaining our scientific independence and involve weighing up the learning and accountability functions of evaluation. We also attempt to create a productive balance between theoretical and methodological rigour on the one hand and practical orientation and usefulness on the other. Finally, we face the challenge of adequately balancing the focus on German development cooperation actors while at the same time sufficiently involving partners from developing countries in our evaluative work.

The paths that we have paved through these and other areas of tension – together with our partners from politics, civil society, development cooperation practice and the evaluation and research community – are increasingly viable. This is no small feat and I would like to extend a big thank you to everyone who has helped shape DEval's start-up phase, either through collaboration or through constructive debate with us. My personal thanks also go to my DEval colleagues who are dedicated to improving the effectiveness and sustainability of development cooperation. I hope that this report will bring their commitment and dedication to life for you, its readers, and that you will enjoy reading it.

Jörg Faust



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## Message from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

### Dear reader,

Development cooperation has never been as important as it is today. Now more than ever it is under close scrutiny from the German public. This makes it all the more important for development cooperation actors to prove that the development cooperation system can work efficiently and effectively. We need to constantly examine our actions, approaches and development programmes and projects. What works well must work better. What doesn't needs to be improved. High-quality, evidence-based, independent evaluations will help us achieve this goal.

It is almost five years since the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) was established. One of the main motivating influences behind its establishment was to strengthen evaluations of development cooperation interventions that are independent and relevant in terms of their policy implications. It is important to me personally that DEval meets with broad-based acceptance and that its work incorporates the wide spectrum of technical and professional expertise of actors in German development cooperation. With this aim in mind, an Advisory Board was also set up at DEval. As the name suggests, its job is to provide advice. Its members include representatives of the parliamentary groups in the German Parliament, of implementing and non-governmental organisations, and of the academic and research community.

DEval has carried out a number of exemplary evaluations such as the evaluation on agricultural value chains. In developing countries, a large proportion of poor people live and work in rural areas. The evaluation established two things. Firstly, that our approaches can help sustainably improve the living conditions of people in rural areas. And secondly, that the chronically poor often only ever benefit indirectly if at all from our interventions – they lack the minimum level of resources required to become involved in the value chain. The evaluation therefore recommends conducting complementary support activities to involve the poorest of the poor in a more targeted manner.

We are already acting on this recommendation by implementing tailored approaches for the ultra poor, for example through our One World – No Hunger Special Initiative, which specifically targets this group and plays a key role in combating malnutrition. The effort involved in evaluating and tweaking the programmes that form part of the initiative has paid off, above all for people on the ground.

The findings of DEval's evaluations are being made accessible to all so that others can incorporate them into their work and benefit as well. This is why

transparency is so important: DEval publishes all of its findings along with information on the methods it uses. For readers with less time on their hands, it also documents the findings in the form of succinct policy briefs. In its response to DEval's reports, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) also spells out how it will follow through on the recommendations.

I firmly believe that evaluation will become increasingly important in future. After all, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development constitutes a commitment by the international community to building a better future. All states that signed up to the Agenda have undertaken to help implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In so doing, each country also accepts that its progress in achieving these goals will be measured; this will require further strengthening of their individual evaluation capacities. DEval therefore supports developing countries in this context too.

Five years of DEval marks a huge achievement. During this time, DEval has succeeded in establishing a sound reputation and in building an international network. However, the anniversary also presents us with an opportunity to take a look at the way forward. DEval has therefore undergone an evaluation of its own work, which has provided key pointers for its future. Further strategic development, which started prior to the evaluation, is promising indeed. I very much support and welcome DEval's undertaking to establish itself as an institute that paves the way in terms of scientifically proven development cooperation evaluations that are both strategically and politically relevant.

I wish DEval continued success in carrying out this important work.

Gerd Müller



**Dr Gerd Müller, Member of the  
German Parliament**  
*German Federal Minister for Economic  
Cooperation and Development*

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**Dagmar G. Wöhr, Member of the German Parliament**  
*Chairwoman of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development of the German Parliament, former State Secretary*

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## Message from the German Parliament

### Dear reader,

The German Parliament is accountable for how tax revenues from its citizens are used. For many years, there was a preconception that development cooperation lacked effectiveness and efficiency.

### Reviewing effectiveness through evaluation

When I took over the chair of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development of the 17th German Parliament, the focus was on implementing international resolutions on improving the effectiveness of development cooperation. As part of structural reform, a number of implementing organisations were merged to form the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) was established.

### Information is key to ensuring that checks and balances are in place

The German Parliament must have all the information it needs to scrutinise the government and its work, the core task vested in it under the German constitution. The Committee therefore favoured an external solution for evaluating the effectiveness of development cooperation. We fought hard for DEval to be designed and structured in such a way that its analyses and assessments can stand up to comparison at the international level too. One thing is irrefutable, however: DEval cannot and must not replace internal evaluation.

### Facilitating participation through cooperation

When DEval was established, one thing that was important for the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development was to safeguard its participation rights, in addition to securing its right to information. This participation includes advance viewing of all reports and representation of all parliamentary groups on DEval's Advisory Board, where we can become involved in evaluation programming. These rights were facilitated – how we actually make use of them is up to us. This report, which I hope attracts a lot of attentive readers, allows me – on behalf of all Committee members – the opportunity to thank DEval's staff for their hard work in setting up the institute. Above all, I would like to express our gratitude for their proactive information policy, including the events offered for members of parliament and their staff. The quantity and quality of evaluation reports published to date prove that setting up DEval was the right thing to do and justify our hopes that DEval will fulfil all of the expectations vested in its establishment.

Dagmar G. Wöhr



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## Message from DEval's Advisory Board

**Dear reader,**

When DEval was established in November 2012, it was difficult to know whether the institute could deliver on what was expected of it. Hopes were indeed high – it was expected to ‘improve the effectiveness of German development cooperation’ based on ‘BMZ’s strategic information requirements’. At the same time, DEval needed to meet expectations at the political level and was reliant on recognition from experts in the field.

An Advisory Board was set up to provide DEval with practical support ‘concerning the planning and implementation of evaluations, including the scientific methods being applied’.

### **New start after initial teething problems**

During its first two years, DEval encountered significant obstacles to its growth. Meeting the expectations outlined above proved difficult. As Board members, we spent more of our time during this phase coming up with ‘quick fixes’ for focusing on what was actually feasible than working on issues or providing advice on scientific excellence.

In the second half of 2014, however, DEval turned a corner. We breathed a deep sigh of relief and were finally able to focus on the institute’s independence and its understanding of its role, its national and international positioning, the status of impact analysis and methodological research and the importance of Evaluation Capacity Development.

### **Importance of inter-ministerial evaluations increasing**

Inter-ministerial evaluations will become increasingly important against the backdrop of the Sustainable Development Goals and the fostering of interlinkages between humanitarian aid and development cooperation. We would therefore like DEval, the BMZ and the German Parliament to proactively encourage inter-ministerial analyses. DEval understands its recognition as a federal research institute as enabling it to ‘bridge the gap between scientifically sound work and practical application’. The Advisory Board will ensure that this recognition will not pose a risk for DEval’s independence.

We hope that over the next five years, DEval continues to receive increased acceptance and recognition from its partners and from experts in the field. It can rest assured of our technical and moral support.

Norbert Hauser



**Norbert Hauser**

*Chairman of the Advisory Board of the German Institute for Development Evaluation, former Vice-President of Germany's Supreme Audit Institution (Bundesrechnungshof)*

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**DARING  
TO INNOVATE.**



# Daring to innovate.

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**DEval is an institutional innovation. It is an independent research institution and also has an established role within German development policy.**

Its institutional purpose is to increase the effectiveness, cost-efficiency and sustainability of development cooperation. It conducts its evaluations **independently in a results-based manner, using scientific research.**

The knowledge that we provide to policy-makers, state implementing organisations, civil society and to the research and academic community in Germany and abroad facilitates **objective discussion** of the opportunities and limitations of development policy. ➡

➔ The institute has become a critical and reliable partner of German and international development cooperation and the evaluation community.

Guest article

## **Evaluation works – DEval as ‘living proof’**

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### **International trend: substantiating results**

Through the adoption of the Millennium Declaration of 2000 and the 2030 Agenda launched in 2015, the United Nations member states have set themselves overarching development goals. Indeed, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out in the 2030 Agenda are objectives that need to be realised in wealthy nations too, and not just in poor countries. The 2030 Agenda also picks up on development cooperation (DC) action principles such as the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. These principles include orientation towards and the measurement of results, with a view to achieving the overarching objectives.

Since roughly the year 2000, more money and one-off project successes are no longer considered to constitute enough evidence of the benefits of DC. Achieving sustainable development results at appropriate costs has become the consistent principle of action of DC organisations. Evaluation has therefore become more important at an international level.

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### **Evaluation of German development cooperation**

Evaluation has a long tradition within German DC, although its objects, approaches and

goals have undergone constant change over the years. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has conducted evaluations since it was established, and a dedicated evaluation division was set up at the end of the 1960s. In 2001, KfW Development Bank set up its own evaluation unit too, followed by GTZ, one of the predecessor organisations of what is now known as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), in 2006.

An independent report on evaluation practices in German DC published in 2009 established that, despite progress having been made in individual areas, the system was ‘suffering from institutional, conceptual and methodological heterogeneity’. According to the report, policy-related, empirically sound studies were rarely conducted. Neither were impact evaluations. The authors felt that the institutional fragmentation resulted in a deficit in BMZ’s capacity to exercise political management. The DAC Peer Review conducted in 2010 recommended strengthening strategic evaluations across implementing agencies by setting up an independent evaluation agency or institute.

### **A second chance**

Although the establishment of an independent evaluation agency was discussed already as far back as the 1990s, it took a while for the idea to take shape. The structural reform of German DC in 2010 finally offered a good opportunity for action. This reform revolved around merging the three implementing organisations of German technical cooperation into one agency, which went hand-in-hand with increasing the BMZ’s scope for steering and performance assessment. Strengthening accountability and transparency were therefore

two important arguments favouring the establishment of DEval.

But DEval was to go down a slightly different path. Initially, the focus was on justifying its ability to evaluate the entire spectrum of DC (and not just technical cooperation). Based on the constitutional principle that each ministry conducts its affairs independently and on its own responsibility, DEval’s activities initially focused on the BMZ portfolio. From the outset, however, there were calls for DEval’s remit to be broadened beyond the BMZ portfolio, covering official development assistance across the German government. These calls came both from the BMZ, which has been open to joint evaluations with other ministries, and from some members of the German Parliament.

At the same time, it was clear to DEval’s founders that strengthening accountability is not enough. Thus, the spotlight was soon broadened to include ‘learning’ at the policy and strategic level.

In the medium term, DEval was also intended to serve as a leading institute for DC evaluations. In addition to conducting scientifically sound evaluations, the further development of research-based methods therefore also constituted an integral part of DEval’s remit right from the start. The institute was also meant to develop evaluation capacities in German DC partner countries.

As we can clearly see today, DEval’s institutional and conceptual capacities have been strengthened since its beginning. This will enable it to master future challenges too. ■



**Michaela Zintl**  
Head of BMZ’s  
Evaluation and  
development research  
division



## ➤ Milestones: DEval's timeline

# 2012

**AUGUST:** The institute gets a name and a logo

**OCTOBER:** A DEval team conducts first field visit in Rwanda

**NOVEMBER:** Dirk Niebel, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ State Secretary Hans Jürgen Beerfeltz and DEval's founding director Professor Helmut Asche attend the institute's opening ceremony in Berlin

**NOVEMBER:** First meeting of DEval's Advisory Board

**DECEMBER:** DEval holds its first expert discussion 'Dealing with Complexity' with Bob Williams and Richard Hummelbrunner



# 2011

**JUNE:** The German Federal Government decides to establish an institute in Bonn to evaluate development cooperation projects



# 2013

**JANUARY:** DEval publishes details on the first multiannual evaluation programme

**JUNE:** DEval hosts DeGEval's working group on Development Policy

# 2014

**JULY:** Michaela Zintl takes on the role of acting Director of DVal

**JULY:** Together with its local partners, DVal starts to implement the FOCEVAL Evaluation Capacity Development project in Costa Rica

**SEPTEMBER:** DVal publishes its first evaluation report 'Thirty Years of Rwandan-German Development Cooperation in the Health Sector'

**NOVEMBER:** The institute moves from Tulpenfeld to Fritz-Schäffer-Straße 26 in Bonn



# 2015

**FEBRUARY:** First Policy Brief appears: 'Evaluations of German development cooperation with Afghanistan'

**APRIL:** Professor Jörg Faust is appointed the new Director of DVal

**JUNE:** DVal holds its first brown bag lunch on 'Effects of Branding in Development Cooperation' with Dr Simone Dietrich

**NOVEMBER:** International conference 'Evidence on a Silver Platter' in Berlin (with the ministries of foreign affairs and development cooperation of Belgium and the Netherlands)



# 2016

**APRIL:** Start of the lecture series 'Evaluation and Evidence Based Policy Making for Global Development' (with the University of Bonn)

**SEPTEMBER:** FOCEVAL supports the drafting, publishing and dissemination of evaluation standards for Latin America and the Caribbean

**NOVEMBER:** Hearing of the German Parliament's Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development on DVal's evaluation of development workers



# 2017

**JUNE:** After five years of DVal: 18 reports, 42 events and 60 staff

**JULY:** Completion of the external evaluation of DVal







# Our mandate: more effective development cooperation

DEval was established in 2012. Its purpose is to implement independent, strategically relevant evaluations of German development cooperation interventions, further advance methods and standards and build evaluation capacities in the partner countries of German development cooperation.

The institute operates at the interface between policy-makers, the research and academic community and development cooperation practitioners. In addition to triggering institutional learning, it supports the German Government and the Parliament in carrying out their respective supervisory and control functions vis-à-vis development cooperation implementing organisations and the executive branch.

## Fostering learning, increasing accountability

Independent evaluations create knowledge about whether, how and under what circumstances something works. These findings are key for German and international development policy as they allow us to learn from the results of previous action and improve future interventions. That constitutes a good basis for achieving the core objectives of development policy in an effective and sustainable manner. At the same time, evaluations increase transparency and

## DEval's vision

“DEval’s evaluative work improves the effectiveness and sustainability of development cooperation. We promote learning and objective decision-making in public policy and practice. We achieve this through scientifically sound, practice-oriented knowledge.

DEval also strengthens the democratic legitimacy of development cooperation, as its independent evaluations increase transparency and accountability.”

accountability, which in turn strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the policy field. The importance of evaluation in German and international development policy has therefore increased significantly in recent decades.

DEval receives its mandate from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The focus of our core business of evaluation is usually not on individual projects and programmes. Instead, we concentrate on overarching issues that are strategically important in terms of policy, for state implementing organisations and civil society actors in Germany and for partners in developing countries and emerging economies. What do we know about the controversial instrument of budget support, for example? Is the Development Service instrument, which places development workers to implement activities and was established in 1963, still fit-for-purpose and effective? Does cooperation with the private sector, the importance of which is increasing, fulfil its ambitious objectives?

These are the types of strategic questions that DEval’s evaluations answer using scientifically sound results. This by no means limits the practical use of our evaluations. The very opposite, in fact. Our findings and recommendations are designed

to trigger specific changes and increase the effectiveness and sustainability of German development cooperation. If we can manage to do this successfully then the policy field will meet a greater degree of acceptance in Germany and in its partner countries. The section 'Fostering learning. Strengthening accountability' from page 35 onwards provides numerous examples of such evaluations.

Some key issues need to be clarified if evaluations are to be of any real use. For example, what knowledge do decision-makers in politics, implementation practice and partner countries need in relation to development cooperation structures, instruments and programmes if decisions that will improve development cooperation are to be made and implemented? How can this knowledge be created? And how can we ensure that it is as reliable as possible? What scientific expertise do we need to this end? And how can we incorporate what we learn into political and administrative decision-making processes?

#### **‘For’ the target groups means ‘with’ the target groups**

We receive suggestions of what themes to include in our evaluation programme – often via our Advisory Board – from the German Parliament, the BMZ, civil society and from the academic and research community. We pool these suggestions with our own thematic priorities to compile a multiannual evaluation programme. This allows us to ensure that our work remains strategically relevant for German development policy.

For each evaluation, we set up reference groups that are based on a similar principle of consultative participation. They mainly

comprise policy-makers with responsibility for the object of the specific evaluation and development cooperation practitioners with responsibility for the subject area. Where suitable, a reference group is also set up in the partner country. The reference groups play a key advisory role. The development cooperation actors affected by the evaluation support the evaluation process, for example by providing data and by incorporating technical feedback at key points.

This is a time-consuming undertaking, but worthwhile as it increases the practical relevance as well as the degree to which evaluations and their recommendations are accepted, particularly if the subject matter is sensitive. Despite the need for consultation, DEval retains its independence, however, and reserves the right to make decisions related to delimiting the object of the evaluation, selecting methods, collecting and analysing data and drawing conclusions and recommendations. Consultation with the reference group nevertheless plays a key role in ensuring that DEval makes well-informed decisions.

We also want to reach a broad section of the professional public with our work, providing it with information on complex issues in the field of German development cooperation. This will help ‘objectify’ debate on development cooperation, where necessary. This is an important step, as development themes have become more relevant within society in recent years, given the increasing

“

**We can only really learn from our evaluations if we select our topics carefully, deliver high-quality analyses and work closely with our target groups.**

”

Professor Jörg Faust, Director of DEval

prevalence of migration crises fuelled by conflict, terrorism and global environmental degradation.

### Creating robust knowledge based on research

A scientifically sound, methodologically robust approach is an integral part of our philosophy. For example, rigorous, scientifically sound approaches and methods are needed to analyse the complex causal relationships that are inherent in development interventions. Our empirical and analytical focus ensures that our actions are guided by normative and ethical principles.

Staff from a wide range of disciplines work closely together at DEval. This transdisciplinary approach ensures that our findings are reliable, innovative and useful. For example, in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the weltwärts volunteer service, large-scale surveys of volunteers were combined with qualitative group discussions to address psychological and sociological issues related to how and why volunteers changed as a result of the assignment. Geographers also helped the

team to analyse the global distribution of assignment placements. Administrative skills were also required in order to conduct a cost analysis of the programme.

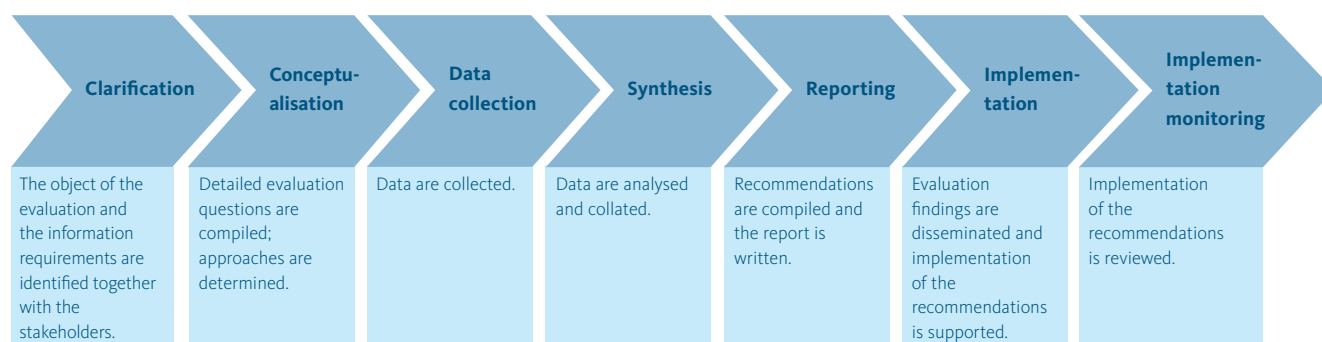
From a methodological point of view, we also proceed in a pluralistic manner. If we examine the impact of a GIZ approach to land-use planning in the Philippines or to sustainable economic development in Myanmar, for example, we use rigorous quantitative methods to analyse the object of the evaluation. We also apply various qualitative empirical social research methods to place our findings in their social and political context. The section ‘Creating knowledge’ (from p. 23) provides an insight into the diverse methods and approaches that DEval uses in its evaluations.

“

**We harness innovative design as well as processes in evaluation and transformation inherent in development policy to engage in systematic exchange with actors in the field of research and academia.**

”

Dr Sven Harten, Head of the Competence Centre for Evaluation Methodology at DEval



We believe that our scientific work is not an end in itself. Our evaluations use applied research methods to generate knowledge that is relevant to practitioners and useful for policy-related decisions and implementing development cooperation interventions at the operational level. It is coherent with this understanding of our work that DEval became one of the Federal Government's official ministerial research institutes in 2016.

#### **Independence, transparency and integrity**

In order for DEval to properly fulfil its mandate, there will always be a certain degree of controversy involved: it needs to ask critical questions, present challenging findings and exercise constructive criticism. To this end, it is paramount that we remain independent and accountable for our work and that our findings are always transparent. One of the ways that DEval ensures this transparency is by publishing all of its evaluation reports in full.

Evaluations on issues such as cooperation with the private sector, the instrument of budget support or the action plan for the inclusion of persons with disabilities always touch on controversial subjects that call for independence and the transparent presentation of our findings if our conclusions and recommendations are to be credible and meet with acceptance.

For us, independence does not, however, mean creating as much distance as possible with regard to the objects in hand or with those affected by an evaluation. Instead, we want to engage in exchange with them in order to safeguard the quality of our work and promote learning. This simultaneous independence and consultation requires a

large degree of professional and institutional integrity. Vis-à-vis the stakeholders of our evaluations, it means that we deal independently, impartially and responsibly with them and treat any information we acquire in this context confidentially. At the same time, DEval evaluators have finely tuned communication and mediation skills, which are crucial if the desired learning processes are to gain traction. We want to channel integrity within our institute and incorporate it as an important part of our institutional culture.

#### **Disseminating knowledge, forging networks**

DEval relies on more than just its own evaluation capacities – it also wishes to improve evaluation practices across development cooperation as a whole. Outside of Germany, we are assisting our partners in Costa Rica and in other Latin American countries in strengthening and expanding their evaluation capacities. This includes, for example, jointly developing evaluation standards, structures and processes and transferring methodological knowledge. In Germany, actors from the research and academic community are close partners, as are evaluation and development policy practitioners. DEval networks with them, exchanges knowledge and experience and supports education and training. The section 'Disseminating knowledge. Forging networks.' from page 57 onwards takes a detailed look at DEval's activities in the area of Evaluation Capacity Development.

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**We regard integrity as gearing our actions towards joint values and professional principles.**

”

Anne Schönherr,  
Head of Administration at DEval

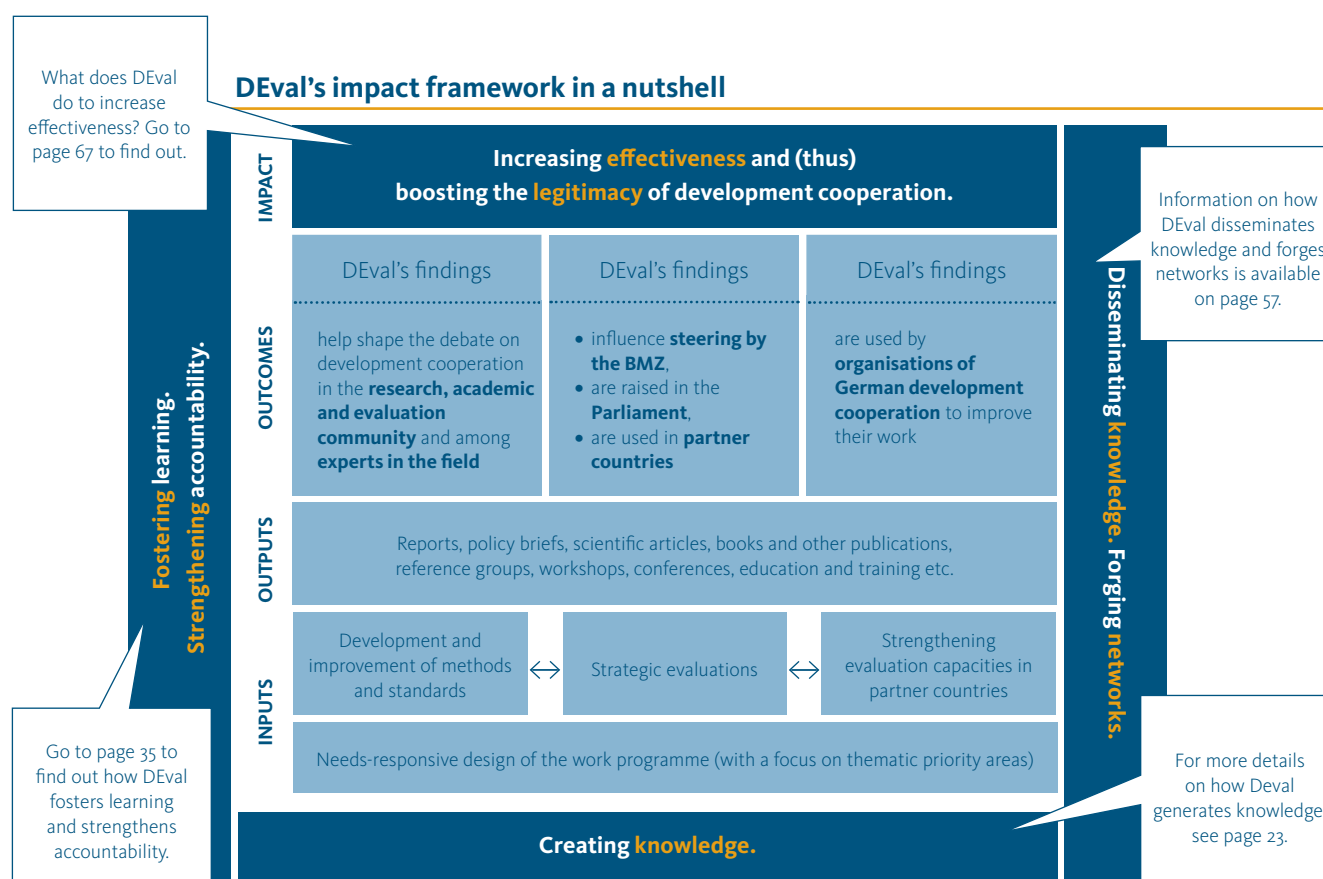
“  
Our cooperation with DEval provided us with an excellent opportunity for further developing the evaluation capacities of decision-makers in politics and in the public service.  
”

Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo,  
Planning Minister of Costa Rica

### DEval's results model

DEval does more than just project expectations onto others. We also want to question our own effectiveness and encourage others to question it too. We have therefore developed a results model for DEval that is presented below in a highly condensed format. It describes inputs, outputs, outcomes and the impact of our work. The key roles that evaluation plays provide the 'structure' for the results model, as do DEval's functions. We will take a closer look at these roles and functions in the following sections. We follow

this logic in our day-to-day work: learning and accountability for increasingly effective development cooperation. For increased legitimacy. Using research-based knowledge. Jointly with others – yet independent and transparent. ■







**CREATING  
KNOWLEDGE.**

## Creating knowledge.

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Our evaluations show what works in development cooperation and what doesn't. What results does it achieve? Where can improvements be made?

DEval uses **innovative** evaluation approaches and scientific methods to create this knowledge. Our strategic evaluations spell out **complex causal links** in development cooperation. Our research-based strategy sheds light on the facts. To do this, we tailor our evaluation approach and methods to the issues we examine and develop them further where necessary. ➡

➔ Development interventions are frequently implemented under difficult socio-economic, environmental and political conditions. To find out what works, we need to gain an excellent understanding of this context.

Interview



## ➔ **Theories: more than a means to an end**

Theories form a key element of any evaluation. But what is their exact purpose and what advantages do theory-based approaches offer? Helge Roxin, Team Leader at DEval, and Ida Verspohl, DEval evaluator, explain how they use theory-based approaches and the role they play in their ongoing evaluations.

### How do you approach a new evaluation?

**Helge Roxin:** The first thing we need to do in any evaluation is to understand the results that the development instrument or programme has set out to achieve, how it intends to do this and the logic on which the planned results are based. An evaluation only examines whether this is working as planned in the next step.

### And this is where theories come into play?

**Ida Verspohl:** Yes. More often than not we are analysing development cooperation in fields where there is little conceptual knowledge. We use a theory-based approach to generate this knowledge, thereby laying a theoretical foundation that ensures that the upcoming evaluation can deliver useful information from the outset.

**Helge Roxin:** We start by developing a tailor-made theory for the object of the evaluation that combines the ideas behind the programme with any existing scientific and evaluative knowledge. This is often a challenging task particularly when the topics being examined are complex.

### What are the advantages for the stakeholders of the programme being evaluated?

**Helge Roxin:** Developing a theoretical basis together with them provides them with a good opportunity to take a step back from their routine tasks and reflect on their intentions for and expectations of the programme. They can learn a lot from this process alone. In many cases, the stakeholders



Helge Roxin, DEval Team Leader and Ida Verspohl, DEval evaluator in interview

develop a greater sense of identity with the evaluation at the latest once they are able to hold a copy of the results logic drafted together with DEval and to see for themselves the benefits of the evaluation questions formulated on this basis. After all, the idea of conducting an evaluation usually does not stem from them and they may initially be somewhat sceptical and reticent about participating.

#### **But the ultimate goal is also to create knowledge?**

**Ida Verspohl:** Yes, our ongoing evaluation of sustainability in German development cooperation is a very good example. Evaluation practitioners have so far been unable to reach a consensus on what exactly constitutes sustainability in development cooperation. We need specific criteria to assess this, however. We have therefore started to develop new conceptual contexts and perspectives, to systematise and incorporate existing approaches where necessary and, in this way, to build a general concept for this complex subject. This is important groundwork.

**Helge Roxin:** It never ceases to amaze me how much undocumented knowledge programme managers have at their fingertips. We conduct joint discussions to unleash this expertise. Adopting an approach of addressing conceptual issues from the results perspective, together with the stakeholders, allows everyone involved to reflect on this knowledge and to exchange views with people on the outside looking in. Ideally, this process triggers joint learning. As a second theoretical pillar, we analyse documents, the context and the development portfolio and work through any existing scientific literature. This step alone allows DEval to create knowledge that could previously not be easily accessed by stakeholders.

#### **What stumbling blocks or obstacles have you encountered?**

**Ida Verspohl:** Ideally, each project is based on a theory of change, i.e. a chain of underlying assumptions. So in other words, the occurrence of A results in B. In order to ensure that the theory is scientifically robust, we need to take a close look at all of these assumptions. Doing so may reveal that previous programme plans were based on several prerequisites and may require ‘tweaking’ at a number of different junctures. In some programmes, however, identifying such weaknesses is not desired.

What’s more, it is not enough to just look at the programme’s logic. Its context is relevant too. But just how much of the context does an evaluation need to take into account? This is a difficult question to answer from a purely scientific perspective. Involving the stakeholders in the analysis usually proves very beneficial in this respect. In some cases, we examine individual aspects or projects and take a closer look at ‘partial evidence’. But this is not enough to explain the ‘big picture’.

#### **So, you generate the basic knowledge for an evaluation from two sources. What is more important, the stakeholders’ experiential knowledge or the scientific insights?**

**Helge Roxin:** It is important to establish a balance between the stakeholders’ experiential knowledge and any existing scientific insights. If the scientific aspects fall short, there is a risk that an evaluation will only examine what the stakeholders already have a handle on. If the scientific side of things dominates, however, the stakeholders will be inundated with theory. ■



## Data and early planning: the basis for impact evaluations

In recent years, interest in impact evaluations has increased significantly, particularly in the field of development cooperation. Randomised controlled trials (RCTs) have often been deemed the 'gold standard' in terms of impact evaluation design. However, it is rarely possible to use rigorous methods alone to evaluate entire development programmes, which are frequently complex and multifaceted. In order to be able to assess the impact of an intervention at the end of implementation, in-depth information is required at the baseline (the situation before the intervention started) as is continuous data collection while the intervention is being implemented.

### Myanmar: evaluative thinking from the outset

The resumption of bilateral cooperation between Germany and Myanmar in 2012 provided the BMZ with a unique opportunity to pay special attention to impact orientation in the early planning phase of the country programme. DEval was asked to support this process in order to create conditions conducive to measuring impact at the programme level.

DEval chose a theory-based approach so as to embed evaluative thinking early on, during the programme's planning phase. In this way and together with the stakeholders

involved, DEval developed a programme theory and results models at the project level, thereby creating a joint understanding of impact and the underlying causal mechanisms. Indicators were developed for each intended change, and information needs were identified on this basis. Two questions in this context were: what data is available that can provide this information? And what instruments can be used to collect data?

This information was needed in order to identify the situation at baseline and use it as a reference point for measuring changes throughout the programme. It also provided a foundation for making evidence-based decisions for steering both the programme itself and its projects.

DEval used a combination of different methods to collect these data. Key elements of this approach included a nationwide standardised survey of small and medium-sized enterprises and semi-structured interviews with key individuals, which were enhanced by a standardised survey of banking staff, a comprehensive literature review and information from secondary sources.

Follow-up data collection is planned, which will involve interviewing the same individuals using the same data collection instruments. A final impact evaluation will be carried out at the end of the programme in 2019/2020. ■



**Dr Stefanie Krapp**  
Sociologist,  
Head of Department  
at DEval

**Heike Steckhan**  
Psychologist,  
DEval evaluator

**Miriam Amine**  
Social scientist,  
DEval evaluator

➔ Evaluation: Impact, Diffusion and National Scaling-up of a Comprehensive Land-use Planning Approach in the Philippines (ongoing)

## Reliably measuring impacts

Has a development intervention achieved the desired impact? That is a key issue for development policy and also the main challenge facing impact evaluation. In order to find adequate answers, it is important for DEval to choose the right methods for each evaluation.

In its evaluation of land-use planning in the Philippines, DEval chose to use a quasi-experimental evaluation design to reliably measure the impacts of the intervention and to distinguish between the impacts that could be attributed to the programme and to external factors. In this context, DEval examined the changes that had been experienced by a treatment group whose members were targeted by a programme intervention and compared them with the changes in a control group that did not benefit from the programme. As it is frequently not possible in evaluation practice to randomise individuals to treatment or control groups, DEval uses statistical matching procedures to simulate experimental conditions.

### The impacts of improved land-use planning

Together with the planning authorities of the Philippines, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH used an innovative approach to help improve land-use planning and disaster risk management.

The aim was to draft sustainable and comprehensive plans that incorporate different levels of planning and take into account the conditions of the ecosystems and people's needs.

During two data collection phases in 2012 and 2016, DEval examined the impacts achieved by this approach. It used a combination of different methods to do this: quantitative survey data were integrated with data from qualitative interviews and a document analysis as well as with geographic data on locations, environmental conditions and infrastructure.

These methods depict the impacts that improved land-use planning and effective land management has achieved over time from the household to the municipal level. Development actors can use the findings to optimise their own land-use planning programmes. The knowledge acquired by the evaluation enables planning authorities in the Philippines to set priorities in future plans more effectively. It allows them to identify which efforts – many of which run for several decades – lead to the desired impacts.

### Transparency when dealing with data

DEval believes that it is important to not only describe its scientific methods in a transparent manner, but also to ensure that the data it collects is equally transparent. This enables other actors to use the data collection protocols when reforming land use in other countries. Furthermore, open access to data records allows others to take a critical look at the knowledge created. ■



**Dr Gerald Leppert**  
Economist,  
DEval Team Leader



**Dr Malte Lech**  
Geographer,  
DEval evaluator







- ➔ Evaluation: Effectiveness and Sustainability of Budget Support.  
Evaluation Synthesis and Exit Evaluation (ongoing)

## Evaluation syntheses: helping to objectify debate

Critical debate on the effectiveness of general budget support – an instrument held in high regard in development cooperation for many years – gathered momentum around 2010 and has become increasingly politicised ever since. The focus of discussion lay first and foremost on the risks associated with budget support, an aid modality used by donors to transfer financial resources directly to the national treasury of partner countries. Corruption and human rights violations in recipient states, along with the findings derived from increased monitoring of the use of development cooperation funds by donor countries ultimately resulted in a large-scale withdrawal from general budget support. The fact that diverse evaluations had highlighted its positive results was more or less ignored when it came to assessing the instrument's overall effectiveness. Attempts by different organisations to use evaluation syntheses to objectify the debate remained largely unsuccessful, not least because of doubts as to whether the methods used in these studies were able to deliver reliable conclusions in the first place.

Against this backdrop, DEval adopted a previously unused methodical approach to evaluation syntheses to once again systematically evaluate all prior findings in relation to the effectiveness of budget support, the ultimate aim being to objectify debate.

### Systematic evaluation syntheses

Frequently, an overview of the greatest possible number of individual evaluations and studies is required in order to establish a well-founded assessment of an instrument's effectiveness. DEval's systematic evaluation synthesis is a tool used to establish such an overview and is usually based on quantitative analyses of individual projects or programmes.

But few, if any, quantitative impact evaluations are carried out for complex development cooperation programmes in particular. This is why DEval uses systematic evaluation syntheses to also establish an overview of and to assess qualitative studies, based on the standards used in systematic reviews.

### What information on budget support is reliable?

In this evaluation synthesis, DEval adopted a systematic approach, which was strongly geared to the standards applied in a systematic review.

The study spans a wide range of publications from evaluations, peer-reviewed scientific articles and grey literature such as reports from think-tanks. The evaluation synthesis clearly categorises the information in the individual publications in terms of its reliability. The DEval team broke down the information sources into the categories 'best evidence' and 'second-best evidence' and then examined what sources in which categories corroborated the various statements on effectiveness. Adopting this approach also showed where additional analysis is required to fill further gaps in evidence. ■



**Magdalena Orth**  
Political scientist,  
DEval Team Leader



Interview

## ➔ **Methods: evaluators' tools**

DEval's evaluations establish how well development cooperation works. As effectiveness is not always evident at first glance, we use suitable theories and appropriate methods to identify results. In the process, we not only create new knowledge, but also open up opportunities for learning and for accountability. Here, Dr Martin Noltze, DEval Team Leader, and Dr Lena Hohfeld, DEval evaluator, answer key questions on the role played by theories and on the methods they use in their work.

### How does DEval create knowledge?

**Martin Noltze:** At DEval, knowledge creation starts with choosing exciting evaluation objects. The potential for innovation plays a key role in the selection process. In other words, our primary aim is to evaluate strategies and approaches where we still lack know-how on effectiveness. We start by developing theories that allow us to develop assumptions. We then use scientific methods to examine these assumptions.

**Lena Hohfeld:** It is important for us to determine the 'altitude' of our methodological approach. To this end, we have developed a broad product portfolio that we use to take a closer look at complex issues. In some cases, we work with case studies in selected countries. We use evaluation syntheses and transnational econometric studies in order to generate learning effects on overarching issues.

### So what you are saying is what you need first and foremost is a suitable method for each individual evaluation?

**Martin Noltze:** Selection of appropriate methods is always based on the characteristics of the object of the evaluation and on the specific issues to be examined. Finding out whether something has worked as planned will require different methods than establishing how or why this did or did not happen. Ultimately, we always use a combination of different methods to balance out the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of another.

**Lena Hohfeld:** We always work in multidisciplinary teams to facilitate this approach. This could involve a development economist working with a geographer or psychologist on selecting suitable methods, which makes things exciting.





Dr Lena Hohfeld, DEval evaluator and Dr Martin Noltze, DEval Team Leader in interview

### **What is the advantage of combining different methods in an evaluation?**

**Lena Hohfeld:** Combining different methods allows us to substantiate our statements to a greater degree. We want to avoid a situation where we draw a certain conclusion simply because we used a specific method. We also use different methods throughout an evaluation. For example, the findings of a qualitative preliminary study such as interviews of experts on site may often be needed before we can design a quantitative household survey.

**Martin Noltze:** The great complexity of evaluation objects and the diverse range of issues examined by DEval are demanding in terms of the combination of methods used. Time and again, we need to find solutions that are not only appropriate for the object in question but are innovative too. We want to become even better at this and have undertaken to work to a greater degree on integrating different methods in complex evaluations over the next three years.

### **What challenges are faced in complex evaluations?**

**Martin Noltze:** We need to start by delineating the object of the evaluation. At first glance, it often seems that everything is interlinked. It is up to the evaluation team to start by establishing a clear overview. This means that at the outset, we need to

(re)construct a results logic or programme theory that can be used as a basis for the evaluation.

**Lena Hohfeld:** The subsequent substantiation of results poses a further challenge. In complex evaluations, we need to pursue a number of different interactions and rival explanations before we can say with any specific degree of certainty that the improvement of mother-and-child health, for example, can in fact be attributed to the introduction of community-based health insurance.

### **How do development cooperation evaluations differ from development research?**

**Martin Noltze:** Evaluation always focuses on the practical benefits. We derive the questions asked and the objects evaluated based on the information requirements of our target groups, notably policy-makers first and foremost. They can use our findings to introduce improvements and learning processes and to legitimise their work.

**Lena Hohfeld:** In order to achieve this objective, we invest heavily in participatory processes. For each evaluation, we set up a reference group with representatives of the target group and involve them throughout the entire evaluation. In this way, the members of the reference group can extract useful information even while the evaluation is still ongoing. This means that change is often initiated even before we publish our reports. ■

## Contribution analysis: ideal for complex subject matters

DEval's first complex evaluation took a closer look at Rwandan-German development cooperation in the health sector. Since a sector-wide approach was launched in 2007, these joint activities are considered to provide a role model for the further advancement of development cooperation. Several bilateral and multilateral donors and the Rwandan Government wanted to improve the harmonisation and coordination of their efforts. This involved not just aligning individual projects and programmes to a greater degree but also developing joint financing modalities such as sector budget support and basket funding and engaging

in closer cooperation in the fields of policy dialogue and technical cooperation.

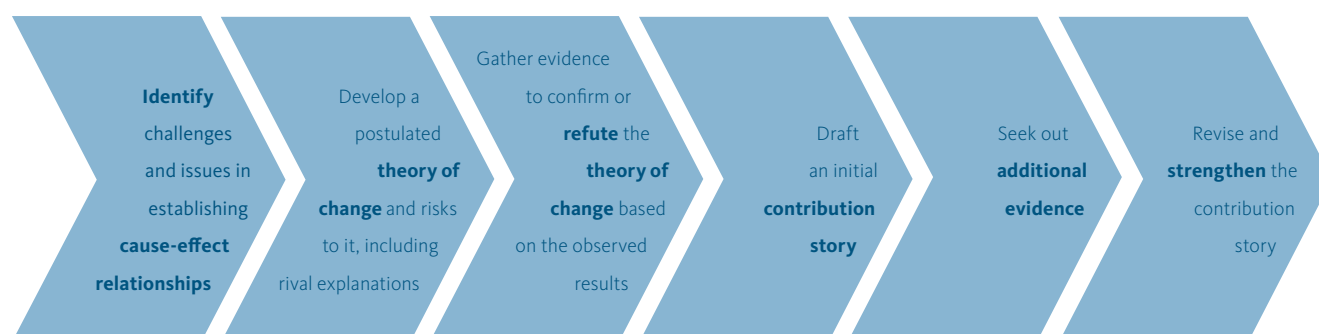
DEval's evaluation aimed to identify the contribution German development cooperation has made to the development of the Rwandan health system and to pinpoint the knowledge and experience gained through joint activities in the health sector, while at the same time keeping an eye on how development cooperation strategies can be further improved.

### Taking a look at the big picture

From a methodological point of view, the complexity of the task was very challenging indeed. The programme involved diverse donors and comprised several components and levels of action. One of its key principles was that the partner government leads and takes ownership. It was therefore strongly geared to Rwanda's priorities in the health sector.

Contribution analysis offered an appropriate method for dealing with this level

### Contribution analysis – step-by-step



of complexity. To start, a theory was developed on the programme's intended results, which served as a reference point for identifying the results that were actually achieved. Contribution analysis takes into account what factors can influence the contributions made and how they do this. It focuses on how development interventions contribute to an observed overall result. One advantage of adopting this approach is that there is a stronger focus on causal mechanisms and the interplay of influencing factors.

### What did the analysis

#### achieve?

The evaluation team was able to use the potential of contribution analyses to not only establish whether something was achieved, but also to identify how it was achieved.

For example, the evaluation established that performance-based financing of the health system increases staff motivation, which can in turn boost their performance

and ultimately improve the level of service provision. The evaluation also identified unintended negative effects, however. In some cases, external incentives reduced the high intrinsic motivation of health staff.

It also found that a lack of coordination among donors affects the effectiveness of instruments such as programme-based joint financing modalities. ■

### The trend towards harmonisation requires a shift in methodological thinking

For some years now, development donors have been trying to improve harmonisation of their contributions and tailor them to a greater degree towards the development strategies of partner countries. They are also placing increased focus on transparency and joint accountability in an effort to resolve widespread fragmentation in the donor landscape.

This trend posed a challenge for DEval's evaluation team as it had to view the contributions made by different development partners in their totality rather than as separate entities. This shifted the focus away from substantiating the success of individual bilateral programmes and projects and towards identifying individual and joint contributions to overarching results. This complexity called for the use of innovative evaluation approaches.

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**The evaluation has been carried out at the express request of both governments, in order to document and evaluate the outcomes of Rwandan-German cooperation [...] The evaluation makes it clear that the strong ownership of the Rwandan Government was an essential prerequisite for the success of the cooperation efforts.**

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The BMZ's response to the evaluation



**Dr Martin Noltze**  
Agricultural economist,  
DEval Team Leader



**Dr Thomas Schwedersky**  
Agricultural sociologist,  
DEval Team Leader



**FOSTERING  
LEARNING.  
STRENGTHENING  
ACCOUNTABILITY.**



## Fostering learning. Strengthening accountability.

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Evaluations allow us to learn from experience. They create transparency, and increase the accountability of actors as a result.

Through our evaluations, we want to trigger **change** in order to boost the effectiveness, economic efficiency and sustainability of development cooperation. In this context, we focus on strategic issues and overarching processes rather than primarily on individual projects. The aim is to enable actors who plan and implement development interventions to **learn together** about where improvements can be made. ➡

➔ At the same time, we increase **transparency** regarding the use of public funds. The German Parliament, the media and the general public rightly demand accountability for where and how development cooperation works and where and how it does not.

## Concrete proposals: harnessing the potential of the private sector

The private sector is not an international development cooperation actor in the traditional sense. For more than twenty years now, a number of approaches have been pursued in order to step up the involvement of the private sector in funding and implementing development interventions.

Such contributions by the private sector are controversial, however. While its advocates see them as a driver of sustainable economic development, critics point to the negative implications of such growth-oriented approaches that are based on the competition principle, including market distortions or biased product specifications.

In 2015, DEval evaluated the processes and effectiveness of the BMZ's develoPPP.de programme, which is its major instrument for cooperation with the private sector.

### Listening to different points of view

The DEval team closely involved programme managers at the BMZ and at the implementing organisations in the evaluation, for example in identifying the issues it was to address. In-depth discussion of the evaluation findings helped increase acceptance of the recommendations made.

The business community and civil society were also involved in the evaluation.

In particular, they pointed out critical aspects of the programme, which the evaluation team took into consideration and examined from the outset.

### Methodological diversity for a complex programme

The programme's heterogeneity posed a methodological challenge for the team. How can we measure the results of a programme that has so far supported more than 1,600 projects in 101 countries across all of the sectors in which development cooperation operates? A theory-based approach brought the required clarity.

A results logic constituted a key element of the approach used and explained why and how the develoPPP.de programme will help achieve specific results. DEval's evaluation team then examined the extent to which the underlying assumptions and causal links applied in reality on the ground.

A combination of methods was used to collect data: analysis of documents and literature, expert interviews, a quantitative portfolio analysis, 12 case studies in four countries and a semi-structured company survey.

### Key findings of the evaluation

The develoPPP.de programme adopts a partnership-based approach that offers strong potential for incorporating the private sector into development interventions. So far, this potential has not been fully leveraged, however. DEval criticised the unclear strategic orientation of the programme's design. Although cooperation with companies does help introduce innovative ideas in partner countries, it is rarely able to achieve results

### The develoPPP.de programme

The BMZ uses the develoPPP.de programme to promote development partnerships with the private sector. In this way, it provides financial and technical support to companies that wish to invest in developing countries and emerging economies. The projects are designed to benefit the local population in the long term and

create added business value.

The companies involved contribute at least half of the project costs and cooperate with one of the three implementing organisations that carry out the programme on behalf of the BMZ: the Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH (DEG), GIZ and sequa gGmbH.

beyond the project level. develoPPP.de therefore promotes a large number of stand-alone projects. It has also been unable to sensitise companies to development objectives to the desired degree and thus mainstream development cooperation in a wider section of society, in addition to the state and civil society.

In order to ensure that the involved actors are able to further develop the programme at a strategic and conceptual level, DEval provided specific recommendations on how to better harness the strong potential that develoPPP.de offers. The BMZ started to act on initial recommendations – in relation to improving programme monitoring, for example – even before the evaluation had finished. In its response to the evaluation it also declared that it would adapt the programme concept based on DEval's recommendations and involve partners on site to a greater degree. ■



**Christoph Hartmann**  
Sociologist,  
DEval Team Leader



**Kirsten Vorwerk**  
Geographer,  
DEval evaluator

## Participatory stakeholder management

2013 marked the 50th anniversary of the Development Service, an instrument used in German development policy to place development workers in partner countries of German development cooperation. In this very same year, DEval started conducting an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of this key personnel placement instrument. Unlike earlier evaluations of the Development Service, this one took into account all providers and assignment options.

### Key findings of the evaluation

The evaluation concluded that the work carried out by development workers is effective and fit-for-purpose. Specific conditions were attached to this conclusion, however:

- Development workers need to advise their local partners on an equal footing and use their technical, methodological and professional expertise to support changes that drive sustainable development.
- When placing experts, development service providers should continue to successfully combine technical professionalism, solidarity, and long-term commitment at local partner organisations.

### A complex undertaking in uncharted conceptual territory

The evaluation faced three key challenges:

- By the time the Development Service celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2013, around 28 000 development workers had been assigned worldwide. The evaluation needed to take account of this diversity.
- The evaluation team needed to incorporate a wide variety of actors in the evaluation process, above all the seven official development service providers and civil-society organisations and the three divisions responsible at the BMZ.
- The evaluation team only had access to limited, partially contradictory, data on the Development Service. Initially, it also lacked a comprehensive programme logic and a results theory. From a conceptual perspective, this marked uncharted territory.

### The formative phase

For DEval, which was still in its early stages when the evaluation commenced, the evaluation was a good opportunity to prove itself as an independent institute. Vis-à-vis the development service providers, this involved first and foremost demonstrating its independence from the BMZ as the assumed commissioning party of the evaluation, and doing so in a credible manner. It did indeed succeed in attracting interest from and gaining the trust of the providers and in dispelling initial reservations.

### Shaping the process together

In this evaluation, DEval demonstrated its fundamental participatory approach to its work: it involved all stakeholders in planning the evaluation at an early stage. A joint

reference group comprising representatives from the development service providers and from the BMZ was set up to establish a consensus on the evaluation's purpose. This approach ensured ownership, thereby increasing the likelihood that the evaluation's recommendations would be implemented.

Initially, however, a results logic was needed that focused on the intended results of what development workers do rather than on the actual activities they carry out and the services they provide. The evaluation team drafted a results logic with each development service provider before pooling the individual elements into one overarching, generic results logic. This participatory approach ensured that the providers identified with the evaluation and increased their motivation for continued involvement. The development service providers were also able to directly use the results logics for their own work. Finally, the joint results logic provided a solid foundation for reviewing the effectiveness of the development worker instrument.

### Collecting and analysing data

The reference group was closely involved in the evaluation process to start. Once the data collection phase kicked off, the spotlight was cast on a bigger and more heterogeneous group: the representatives of the providers in the partner countries, the development workers themselves, the partner organisations and the ultimate beneficiaries of development workers' support. The evaluation team did of course routinely update the development service providers in Germany.

The focus finally shifted to assessing the development worker instrument. The evaluation team had free rein to choose its

methods. It analysed data independently and drew its own conclusions. In doing so, it created transparency and facilitated the verification of sources and results. From this stage onwards, participation by the development service providers and by the BMZ was limited to consultative contributions.

### Conclusion: a participatory approach is worthwhile

In this evaluation, participatory stakeholder management paid off in many respects. It provided scope for intense exchange and for evidence-based arguments to take traction. It also provided an opportunity to reframe the diverse interests and views of the stakeholders. The approach adopted was not designed to overcome these differences, however, nor was it expected to. Participation also had its boundaries, which were indeed necessary for DEval, its analyses, conclusions and recommendations to remain independent at all times. ■

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**The quality of the development worker instrument is being improved, its interlinkages with other technical cooperation instruments are being fine-tuned and it is being modified to suit the changed assignment landscape in our partner countries.**

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The BMZ's response to the evaluation



**Helge Roxin**  
Political scientist,  
DEval Team Leader

**Dr Thomas Schwedersky**  
Agricultural sociologist,  
DEval Team Leader



## Keeping an eye on the context

Development interventions do not occur in a vacuum – they are implemented in a specific social, economic, environmental and political context. When a project or programme is being evaluated, the evaluation team therefore needs to establish the extent to which this context influences its effectiveness. The more complex an evaluation is, however, the more difficult it becomes to systematically document and analyse how the context shapes the intervention.

### Realist evaluation

In order to take account of the complexity of the context to the broadest degree possible, DEval adopts the realist evaluation approach, where necessary. This approach is underpinned by the assumption that there is no such thing as a development intervention that is equally effective in all situations for all target groups. Great significance is therefore always attached to the context. Realist evaluation thus asks not only whether something works but also how and why something is effective, for whom and in which conditions.

It therefore examines the interaction between the development intervention and the target group's behaviour. How does this interaction bring about a certain change (outcome) in a given context? A realist evaluation always starts by (re)constructing the results logic of the programme, before developing causal hypotheses also known as context-mechanism-outcome hypotheses.

### Agricultural value chains as a focus of development cooperation

In many countries, particularly in Africa, agriculture is the most important sector of the economy. Because of the complexity of the value chains of these products, a multitude of diverse actors are involved – be they smallholders or export companies that operate at the international level. There are many bottlenecks along different stages of the value chain, from working the fields to marketing agricultural products. Many actors do not have access to advisory or financial

services, for example, or poor organisational structures or a lack of quality standards may present a problem.

Since the start of the new millennium, German development cooperation has stepped up its support for agricultural value chains in order to focus on supporting rural development. Development partners include individual farms and governments planning new agricultural policies, for example.

### The context of agricultural value chains

German development cooperation wants to enable smallholder farms and processing micro-enterprises to increase their production and productivity, improve the quality and marketing of their products and generate more income as a result. Improved access to markets and the modernisation of agricultural enterprises play a key role in this context.

One thing is clear: this can only happen if the working and living conditions of the target group enable it to change its actions. For example, smallholder farms can only plant high-yielding varieties of rice if they have access to improved seed. One needs to look at the broader context too, however, and acknowledge that it is more difficult to support entrepreneurial thinking and actions in rural areas than in urban areas.

### Key findings of the evaluation

Under what conditions can support for agricultural value chains be successful and how can the long-term chances of success be increased? DEval's evaluation shows that the development interventions examined improve the living conditions of people living in rural areas. However, people need a minimum level of resources in order to become involved in a value chain. These interventions therefore either do not reach the chronically poor at all, or only reach them indirectly. Other development interventions are required to support them.

German development cooperation will need to sustain its efforts in the long term if support for agricultural value chains is to prove effective. After all, no small farmer or smallholding can change their production techniques overnight. More than anything else, organisational and institutional changes need time to take hold if the desired results are to be attained. ■

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Looking at things from DEval's perspective has been a very enlightening experience. The evaluation verified several of our assumptions and DEval opened up a new angle on key aspects.

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Andreas Springer-Heinze  
(senior planning officer at GLZ)

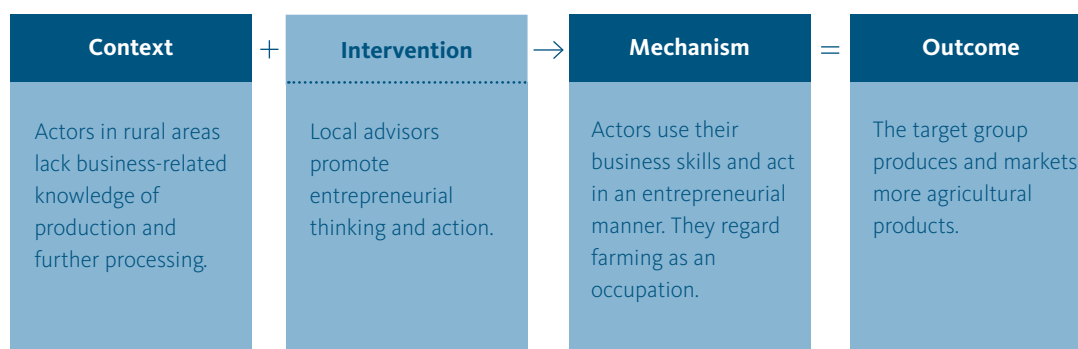


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### Context-mechanism-outcome hypothesis: entrepreneurial thinking and actions



## ➔ DEval publications: reports 2012–2016

**2014**

**A Review of  
Evaluative Work of  
German Development  
Cooperation in  
Afghanistan**

Renate Kirsch,  
Mary Beth Wilson

**2014**

**Thirty Years of Rwandan-  
German Development  
Cooperation in the  
Health Sector**

Thomas Schwedersky,  
Martin Noltze,  
Felix Gaisbauer

**2015**

**Aid for Trade: Policies  
and Strategies in  
German Development  
Cooperation**

Antje Kröger,  
Petra Voionmaa

**2015**

**Baseline Study of DEval  
and Its Environment  
(in German)**

Kim Lücking,  
Simon Bettighofer,  
Simon Freund

**2015**

**Evaluation Practices of  
German Development  
Aid Agencies (in German)**

Kim Lücking,  
Simon Bettighofer,  
Simon Freund

**2015**

**Accompanying Measures  
to General Budget  
Support in Sub-Saharan  
Africa**

Franziska Krisch,  
Johannes Schmitt,  
Ulrike Dörr

**2015**

**Development Workers  
(in German)**

Helge Roxin,  
Thomas Schwedersky,  
Jan Tobias Polak,  
Kirsten Vorwerk,  
Felix Gaisbauer

**2015**

**Small and Medium  
Enterprise Survey  
Myanmar 2015**

Miriam Amine,  
Reinhard Stockmann

**2016**

**Baseline Report for  
the German-Myanmar  
Programme on  
Sustainable Economic  
Development**

Miriam Amine,  
Heike Steckhan,  
Stefan Silvestrini

**2016**

**Health Systems  
Strengthening in German  
Development  
Cooperation**

Khullat Munir,  
Ilse Worm

**2016**

**German Development  
Cooperation's  
Contribution to  
Global Health**

Khullat Munir,  
Markus Freund

**2016**

**The develoPPP.de  
Programme: A Portfolio  
Analysis (in German)**

Kim Lücking,  
Hanne Roggemann

**2016**

**German Aid from a  
Partner Perspective**

Jörg Faust,  
Stefan Leiderer,  
Takaaki Masaki,  
Bradley Parks

**2016**

**Agricultural Value Chains**

Marcus Kaplan,  
Simon Bettighofer,  
Sabine Brüntrup-Seidemann,  
Martin Noltze

**2016**

**Integration of Technical  
Cooperation Instruments  
(in German)**

Lutz Meyer,  
Stefan Oltsch,  
Simon Freund,  
Jan Tobias Polak

## ➔ DEval publications: policy briefs 2012–2016

1/2015

**Evaluations of German Development Cooperation With Afghanistan**

.....  
Renate Kirsch,  
Alexander Kocks

2/2015

**An Effective Mix of Instruments in Health Cooperation?**

.....  
Felix Gaisbauer,  
Thomas Schwedersky

3/2015

**Implementing Aid for Trade in German Development Cooperation**

.....  
Antje Kröger,  
Petra Voionmaa

4/2015

**International Development Cooperation as Perceived by the Afghan Population**

.....  
Jan Böhnke,  
Jan Koehler,  
Christoph Zürcher

5/2015

**Accompanying Measures to Budget Support – Any Added Value?**

.....  
Franziska Krisch,  
Johannes Schmitt

1/2016

**Development Workers – An Outdated Instrument for Development Cooperation?**

.....  
Helge Roxin,  
Thomas Schwedersky,  
Jan Tobias Polak

2/2016

**‘System Review’ – A Catalyst for Better Evaluation Practice in German Development Cooperation?**

.....  
Kim Lücking,  
Simon Bettighofer,  
Simon Freund

3/2016

**Health Systems Strengthening in German Development Cooperation: An Unfinished Business**

.....  
Khullat Munir,  
Gerald Leppert

4/2016

**Agricultural Value Chains**

.....  
Marcus Kaplan,  
Sabine Brüntrup-Seidemann,  
Martin Noltze

5/2016

**German Aid From a Partner Country Perspective**

.....  
Jörg Faust,  
Stefan Leiderer,  
Takaaki Masaki,  
Bradley Parks

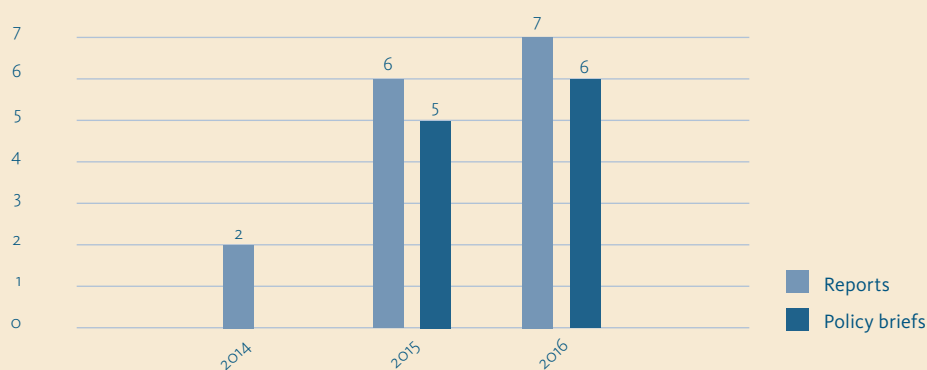
6/2016

**Evaluation Standards for Latin America and the Caribbean**

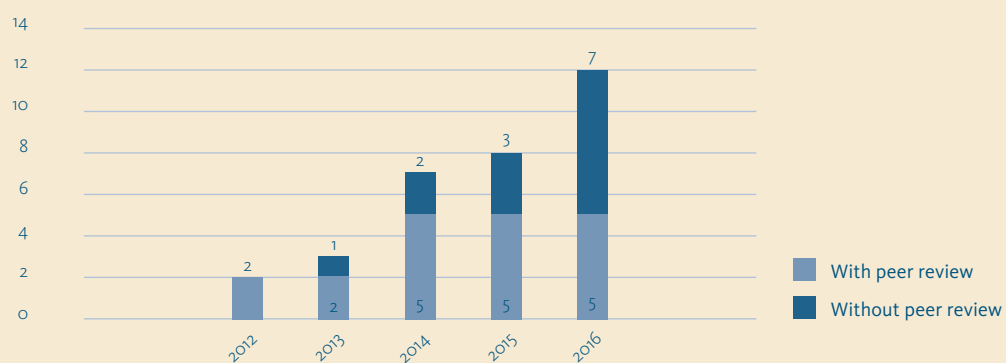
.....  
Sarah Klier,  
Stefanie Krapp

## ➔ Shared knowledge for joint learning

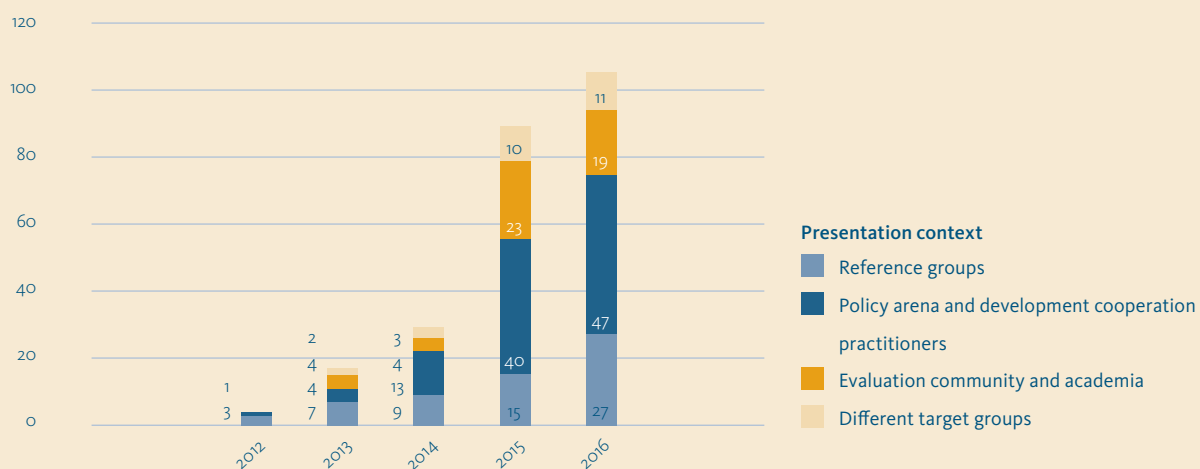
### Published reports and policy briefs



### External publications (articles in scientific journals, chapters in edited volumes, etc.)



### Presentations by DEval staff









## Budget support: neglected aspects of a controversial instrument

Despite its development potential, general budget support is a controversial instrument. Its critics regard the transfer of funds directly into the partner government's budget as posing fiduciary and political risks. Partner countries therefore need to fulfil particularly stringent requirements in terms of accountability.

Because donors want to take additional measures to counteract the risks and support good governance in the partner country, budget support programmes always also include non-financial elements such as policy dialogue between donors and the partner government, different conditionalities and accompanying technical cooperation and capacity development interventions. Accompanying measures are geared to issues such as reforming public finance management, improving development policy and strengthening democratic accountability.

Accompanying measures such as these have played an increasingly important role in general budget support for some years now. How exactly do they work, however, and how do they help achieve the objectives of providing budget support? These aspects have so far not been evaluated in a targeted manner. DEval has been able to close this gap thanks to this evaluation. Its recommendations also provided an important impetus for

improving implementation of budget support and its accompanying measures in German and international development cooperation.

### Key findings of the evaluation

Accompanying measures boost the effectiveness of budget support. They work on deficiencies in the corresponding budget process and strengthen the administrative systems of the partner governments, thereby promoting good governance.

The planning and implementation of accompanying measures are to be better coordinated in future – between the donors of budget support and within German development cooperation too. To this end, DEval recommended improving the interlinkages between financial and technical interventions in order to fully leverage the potential offered by budget support.

*Money can't buy reforms* – DEval's evaluation confirmed this finding, which had already been established by previous evaluations of budget support. Financial resources and accompanying measures can only accelerate a reform process if the government of the partner country is serious about implementing the targeted reforms.

Therefore, only partner countries that assume responsibility for the reform process and fulfil minimum requirements in terms of good governance should receive budget support with accompanying measures.

### Innovative evaluation design

Based on the internationally recognised results logic used in budget support, the evaluation adopted a theory-based approach. It identified the interrelations between accompanying measures and other elements

of budget support and, in this context, analysed causal mechanisms in particular. From a methodological point of view, the evaluation team opted for the sequential use of qualitative and quantitative procedures for data collection (mixed methods design). These included interviews with six international budget support experts, 31 international donors and with 27 representatives of government, parliament, civil society and the media in Mozambique and Tanzania. The team regarded their viewpoint as representative of the position of partner countries. 36 representatives of German development cooperation organisations and 47 representatives of international donor states and organisations also participated in an online survey.

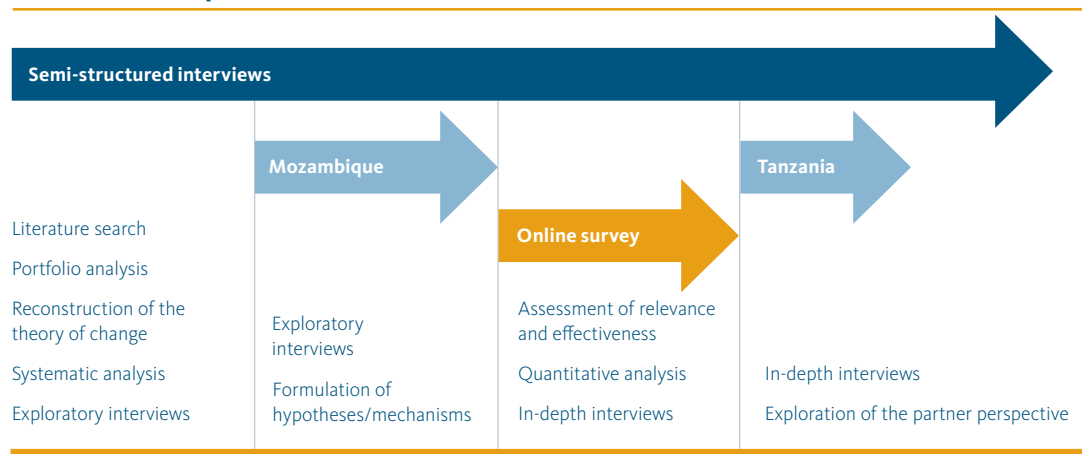
Using this approach, the evaluation team established:

- that accompanying measures are relevant for the effectiveness of budget support. They address weaknesses that cause inefficiencies in the budget support system and eliminate bottlenecks and problems in the budget support system;

- how accompanying measures can help achieve the objectives of budget support. The evaluation identified the key causal mechanisms of accompanying measures. The interrelations that exist between these measures and policy dialogue conducted as part of general budget support create significant added value.

It became evident that the approach developed for identifying the effectiveness of budget support mechanisms within the scope of this evaluation is well suited to establishing the relevance of accompanying measures and how they work. Recent budget support evaluations carried out by the EU Commission have therefore adopted some of the elements of the approach. DEval presented it to a wider audience of experts in the *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation* (vol. 13 no. 28) and at specialised lectures, which not only created added value for international budget support but benefited the international evaluation community as well. ■

## Data collection phase of the evaluation



**Johannes Schmitt**  
Political scientist,  
DEval evaluator

## Technical cooperation: many instruments – one orchestra?

The merger of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, the German Development Service (DED) and InWEnt (Capacity Building International, Germany) to form the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in January 2011 heralded the biggest structural reform ever seen in German development cooperation. The new GIZ was designed to bring together under one roof the expertise and long-standing experience of the three predecessor organisations and the different instruments of technical cooperation.

In addition to financial contributions, the provision of materials and equipment and human capacity development, these included above all the following personnel placement instruments used by German development cooperation: seconded long-term experts (field staff), national personnel, development workers and integrated experts. The new GIZ was to use these instruments in its projects in an integrated manner – i.e. in order to achieve joint objectives – thereby increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of cooperation and the German Government's scope for shaping policy.

The merger became one of development policy's most hotly debated topics, which gave rise to a strong need for justifying the implementation status of the

reform and for identifying lessons learned in relation to the future use of the diverse instruments.

### Evaluation of the integration of instruments: a sound empirical basis

Four years after the reform kicked off, DEval therefore started to investigate and evaluate how the different technical cooperation instruments were being integrated and what results could potentially be achieved by using them in combination with each other. In this context, the evaluation team needed to create transparency regarding implementation of the merger from the point of view of the different stakeholders.

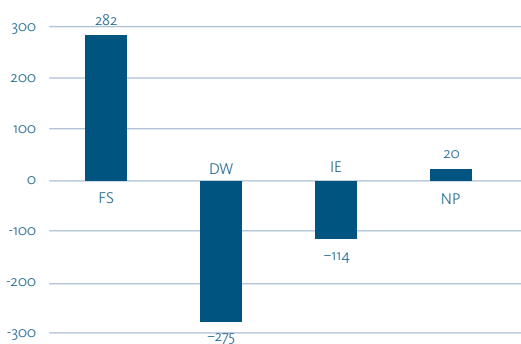
DEval analysed a wide range of programme documentation, guidelines and directives along with statistical material. It also surveyed more than 1,500 German development cooperation experts, conducted case study interviews with more than 250 experts in eight partner countries and interviewed 35 experts in Germany. This meant that DEval conducted one of the most comprehensive surveys of German technical cooperation as part of an evaluation, providing it with a sound data foundation for its analysis.

### Key findings of the evaluation

The evaluation established that even just a few years into the structural reform, the ongoing integration of instruments has already achieved positive results:

- It increases technical cooperation's potential for boosting effectiveness and is therefore to be assessed as predominately successful.
- The instruments are being used in a less fragmented manner.

### Changes in the assignment of technical cooperation's personnel placement instruments between 2011 and 2015



FS: Field staff, DW: Development workers, IE: Integrated experts, NP: National personnel

“

In August 2016, the BMZ agreed on a strategy for strengthening and for improving integration that would emphasise the profiles of the individual personnel placement instruments and of human capacity development.

”

The BMZ's response to the evaluation

- The structural reform, combined with a simultaneous increase in the number of development cooperation staff at embassies in the BMZ's partner countries, has improved the uniformity and coherence of German development cooperation's public image, which in turn has boosted its ability to engage in development policy dialogue in partner countries and enabled the BMZ to monitor development cooperation projects more closely.

However, the evaluation team did recommend that GIZ further improve its structures and processes:

- In the process thus far, the cost-effectiveness of the funds used for TC instruments has not been accorded any particular priority and this should be taken into greater account going forward. Although an increasing number of people in partner countries of German development cooperation are well-qualified

– which should actually reduce the need for seconded experts compared with national personnel – the number of field staff has in fact risen in recent years. The more cost-effective instruments of development workers and integrated experts were also used less frequently than the more expensive option of field staff.

- GIZ should use these instruments in a more partner- and target-oriented manner and should better leverage their synergy potentials.
- Before the structural reforms were introduced, development workers and integrated experts were only obligated to the partner organisations. Following their integration into technical cooperation projects, they sometimes found themselves torn between having to pursue the objectives of the projects and programmes on the one hand and those of the partners on the other. ■



**Lutz Meyer**  
Sociologist,  
DEval Team Leader



## Not just in Afghanistan: protracted crises impede evaluations

Afghanistan is a critical test case for the international community's ability to promote peace and sustainable development in times of ongoing crisis. The situation allows us to probe the different options for evaluating development interventions in the context of violent conflict, however. Germany has been involved in development interventions in Afghanistan for 15 years now and here too the question arises as to whether these interventions are effective.

### More evidence of long-term impacts required

At the end of 2014, DEval took a critical look at previous evaluations of German development cooperation with Afghanistan. The review found the quality of these evaluations to be good. However, it also established that they had usually only ever examined the direct outputs of the interventions, such as improved access to drinking water or higher school enrolment rates. They rarely delivered evidence of broader, longer-term outcomes and impacts such as a general improvement in the population's health, increased income or better governance.

One of the reasons for this, DEval believed, was pressure at the political level to rapidly deliver progress reports that were of

interest to the media. However, in the context of protracted crises in particular, it is important to know whether German development cooperation is also strengthening the resilience of people and institutions to deal with the fallout of conflict in the long term.

### Key findings

DEval is noticing a shift in the evaluation of development cooperation with Afghanistan towards long-term results. A deterioration in the security situation in the country is hampering this positive development, however. Is it even possible to collect the required data in situations of conflict? Can local actors be safely accessed? Will interviewees answer questions strategically because they do not perceive the evaluation to be conflict-neutral?

Evaluations in Afghanistan also need to observe the do-no-harm principle. For example, the opposing sides could use the data collected to exacerbate the ongoing conflict. Evaluation practitioners must use new technologies and methods such as the analysis of satellite data to respond to these challenges.

Whether and how evaluations generate knowledge in difficult situations and facilitate action-oriented learning in the process will become increasingly evident in the context of refugee crises: almost 90% of countries that currently host refugees are developing countries, many of which are themselves experiencing fragility and conflict. Here, evaluations should be used to a greater degree to establish whether development interventions can help stabilise the situation and create long-term perspectives for migrants. This will be an important and indeed very challenging task for evaluation in the future. ■



**Alexander Kocks**  
Political scientist,  
DEval evaluator



## How partner countries view German development cooperation

Development cooperation actors are facing increasing competition to come up with the best ideas and policy proposals to support reforms in their partner countries. It is therefore becoming increasingly important for them to understand how decision-makers in these countries perceive their performance and what they regard as their comparative strengths and weaknesses. This issue is particularly important for Germany, whose development cooperation system is criticised time and again for its complexity. It is all the more surprising, then, that very few reliable transnational studies have so far been conducted on the perceptions of politicians, public administrators and civil-society actors in developing countries and emerging economies. Up to 2014 there were simply no reliable, internationally comparable data in this area.

This changed when the American research institute AidData conducted its Reform Efforts Survey of more than 4,500 representatives of state and civil society from 126 low and middle-income countries on their experiences with development cooperation actors. In addition to the high number of participants, what set this survey apart from others was the fact that these participants had previously been selected in a thorough process, based on clearly defined criteria.

DEval assessed these data in a joint study with AidData in order to establish how the performance of German development cooperation is perceived compared with other donor organisations. Statistical methods were also applied in order to identify individual, sectoral and regional factors that influence access by German development cooperation actors to decision-makers in the partner countries as well as their assessment of the performance of German actors.

### Key findings of the study

The study provided German development cooperation actors with plenty of food for thought. Key findings are:

- Partners do not perceive a clear division of roles and responsibilities between the German embassies and the two implementing organisations GIZ (of which the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH was one of the predecessor organisations prior to its establishment in 2011) and KfW Development Bank with respect to policy advice, agenda-setting and support for the implementation of reforms.
- Policy advice provided by GIZ is regarded as being more useful than that provided by the average bilateral OECD-DAC donor. However, despite the large-scale assignment of personnel, German official development assistance in general does not perform significantly better or worse than the average donor. A similar finding holds true for other large bilateral development partners, however.
- The sectoral work of German development cooperation is also assessed as just 'average'. GIZ has a consistent comparative strength in the environmental sector, which outperforms the average OECD-DAC bilateral donor in all



three areas of reform support. KfW Development Bank also has this comparative strength for agenda-setting in the environmental sector.

- Partners regard primarily large multilateral organisations (as well as some small, quite specialised donor organisations) as relatively strong. Germany – like other large, bilateral OECD-DAC donors – punches below its financial weight in terms of its influence on the reform agenda.

### Follow-on studies can track changes initiated by reforms

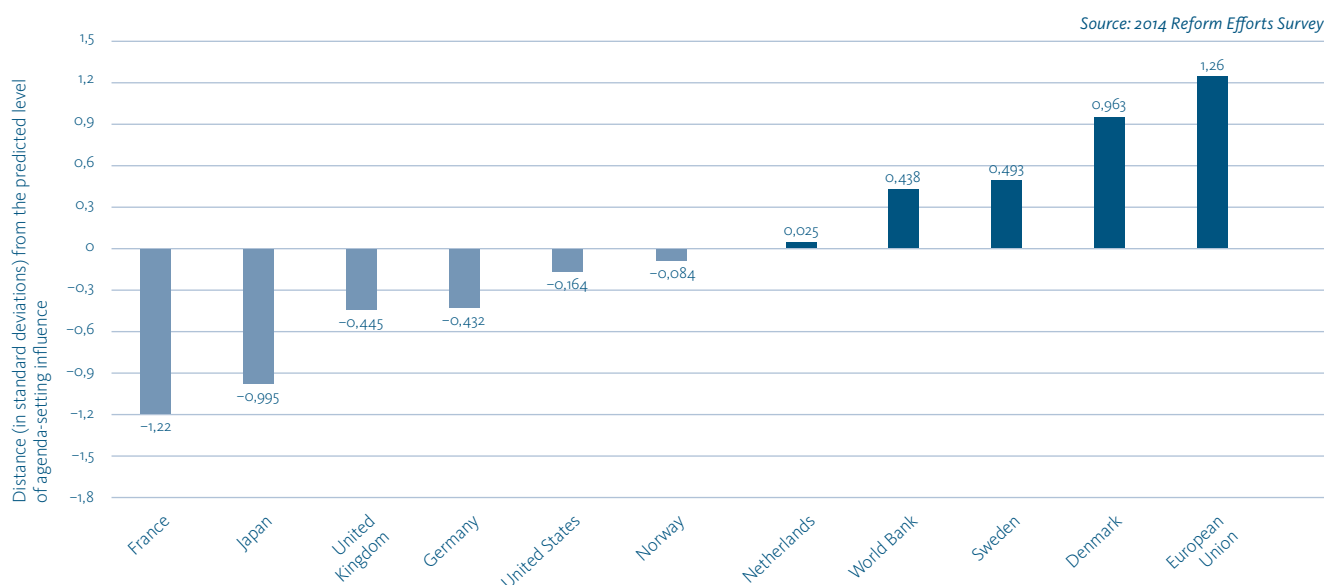
As we can see, the study delivered important guidance for assessing the performance capacity of German development cooperation by international comparison. However, one key restriction lies in the fact that the time frame examined was limited to the period from 2003 to 2014, largely before sweeping

reform of the German development cooperation system. It therefore makes sense to conduct follow-up studies to document any changes in partners' assessments. Such changes may, for example, have resulted from institutional reform of German development cooperation, in particular those resulting from the merger of GTZ, the German Development Service (DED) and InWent (Capacity Building International, Germany) to form GIZ. More detailed studies could also help shed light on the reasons for the different assessments of German development cooperation in its partner countries and deliver key findings for potential improvements in the German development cooperation system. DEval has therefore agreed to continue cooperation with AidData and has included a follow-on project in its evaluation programme for 2017 to 2019. ■



**Dr Stefan Leiderer**  
Economist,  
Head of Department  
at DEval

## The value for money index for major multilateral and bilateral donors



- ➔ Studies: Baseline Study of DEval and Its Environment (2015),  
Evaluation Practices of German Development Aid Agencies (2015)

## Even evaluators are evaluated

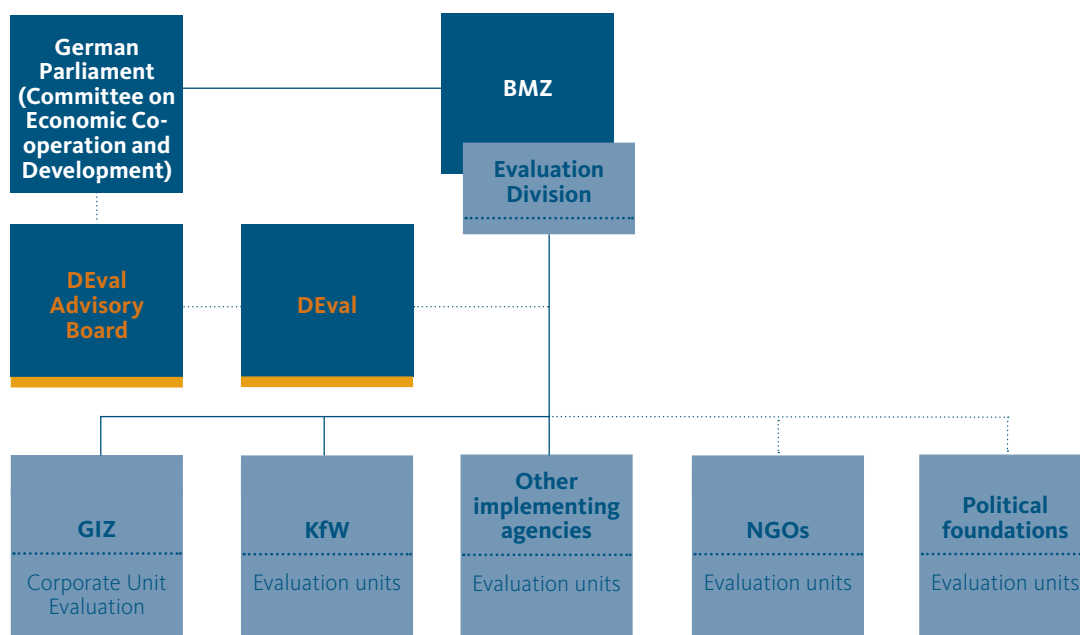
A 2007 study on evaluation practice in German development cooperation, which was commissioned by the BMZ in 2007 and recommended setting up an evaluation institute, was one of the key driving forces for setting up DEval in 2012. DEval's purpose was to advise the BMZ and its implementing organisations and conduct strategic, systemically relevant evaluations in German development cooperation (see figure below). Expectations were indeed high. The institute needed to be independent and competent and be able to carry out credible evaluations.

But in the long term, how is it possible to monitor whether DEval meets the high expectations made of it and, in doing so, contributes to improving German development cooperation? Another question that arises in this context relates to what other changes this 'system review' brought about? DEval carried out two mutually complementary studies to examine these key questions.

### Baseline study of DEval and its environment

For DEval, it goes without saying that there is more to it than simply evaluating others. It also needs to open up its own work to external scrutiny. Before it can be established what changes DEval's work brings about, however, baseline measures are required that describe the situation before the institute

### The evaluation system of German development cooperation



## System reviews

was set up in 2012. A baseline study of DEval and its environment in 2014 provided these data. The study documented the status quo of DEval's various objectives in the period of reference (2009 to 2012; please refer to the condensed impact framework on page 21 for an overview of DEval's objectives). One of DEval's objectives, for example, is that German development cooperation organisations make use of DEval's evaluation findings. To this end, the study set out to identify baseline values that could serve as comparison standards to indicate how development cooperation organisations used the strategic evaluations commissioned by the BMZ before DEval was established.

Data and documents were analysed, development cooperation organisations were surveyed and interviews were held with different stakeholders. DEval then established, with reference to the previous example, that development organisations used evaluations above all when their reports contained specific recommendations for action. It was also established that they used evaluations more if they actually had asked for the evaluation to be carried out in the first place and if the responsible organisational units supported the evaluation process so closely that the evaluation's recommendations could subsequently be implemented effectively.

DEval itself – and others too – could later use these baseline values to determine the extent to which DEval achieves its own objectives.

### Acting on recommendations

The previous system review of German development cooperation, carried out in 2008, looked at 19 organisations. It presented specific recommendations for how each

Two studies conducted in 1997 and 2008 assessed the evaluation systems used by the BMZ and by governmental and non-governmental development cooperation institutions. The studies examined their organisational structures, design, methods and

processes as well as their scope and structure and provided recommendations for further developing the evaluation practices of the individual organisations and of the system as a whole.

organisation could develop its evaluation practices. In 2014, DEval took on the task of reviewing implementation of these recommendations. At the same time, as part of its study 'Evaluation practices of German development aid agencies', DEval examined developments in this area beyond the implementation of recommendations.

### Key findings

In 2014, evaluations were embedded in development cooperation organisations to a greater degree than they were in 2008. The evaluation budget for 2012, the reference year, had also increased compared with 2008. This suggests that the system review strengthened the evaluation system.

It would appear, however, that the organisations did not always fully leverage the learning potential offered by evaluations. Evaluation reports were rarely published in full and were seldom systematically distributed. There may have been legitimate reasons for this, such as a need to protect partner organisations from potential harm. However, evaluation findings cannot be used to promote intra- or interorganisational learning if they remain unpublished for no good reason.

The last system review therefore had a positive impact on evaluation practices in development cooperation. It should now be monitored how these practices develop going forward. The further development of DEval's work also needs to be monitored, as a means of continuously evaluating what evaluators do. ■



**Heike Steckhan**  
Psychologist,  
DEval evaluator

**Dr Kim Lücking**  
Geographer and  
sociologist,  
DEval Team Leader





**DISSEMINATING  
KNOWLEDGE.  
FORGING  
NETWORKS.**

## Disseminating knowledge. Forging networks.

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The knowledge we derive from evaluations and about evaluation methods is not exclusive. We share our knowledge in Germany and abroad, make it available to all those who can benefit from it and develop it further jointly with these actors.

We aim to improve evaluation practice in development cooperation. Outside Germany, we strengthen the **evaluation capacities** of our partners. We transfer methodological knowledge and develop evaluation standards, structures and processes together with our partners. ➞

➔ In Germany, too, we maintain a close exchange with **academics and practitioners** involved in evaluating development cooperation. We are part of an evaluation system that we help to improve on a continuous basis.

## **Evaluation Capacity Development: for the benefit of partner countries**

Carrying out meaningful evaluations is a complex task, which calls for a wide range of substantive, methodological and organisational skills that DEval pools in its team. These capacities are often lacking in the partner countries of German development cooperation, though they are also important for successfully implementing the 2030 Agenda.

As part of its international agreements, Germany has committed to transferring expertise and experience to the partner countries of German development cooperation and in so doing to strengthen their evaluation capacities (Evaluation Capacity Development, ECD). ECD is an important field of activity for DEval.

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### **Broad range of ECD services**

DEval's approach to building evaluation capacities is a systematic one that sees the individual, institutional and social levels as interrelated parts of a whole. Based on this understanding, DEval sets out to generate the greatest possible synergies. What is important is that the partner countries themselves steer and bear responsibility for the ECD process in coherence with their national policies and priorities. Depending on partner needs and local frameworks, DEval carries out ECD as a cross-cutting task, either during evaluations,

in the form of short-term advisory assignments or as independent ECD projects.

### **ECD – a cross-cutting task during DEval evaluations**

DEval involves its partners closely in evaluations right from the planning stage, so that the evaluation can best consider their information requirements. Via the national evaluation societies, DEval recruits evaluators and provides them with the support they require. Wherever possible, DEval uses local reference groups, and commissions local universities or institutes to handle them where large surveys are involved.

For instance, a close partnership is maintained with two universities in the Philippines to collect data in connection with an evaluation of land-use planning there. Training courses are held to build local evaluation capacities, and a national reference group supports the entire evaluation process.

### **Short-term advisory services**

DEval advises individual partners in their monitoring and evaluation activities, and also advises evaluation societies on how to professionalise their efforts in this field. The institute was therefore involved in developing the Latin American evaluation standards adopted in 2016, and is supporting their implementation.

### **Independent ECD projects**

Since July 2014, the Fomento de Capacidades en Evaluación (FOCEVAL) project carried out by DEval in Costa Rica and other Latin American countries has been strengthening the role of evaluation in policy-making and the steering of policy implementation. The project is presented in more detail on page 62.

## **What is Evaluation Capacity Development?**

ECD is an endogenous change process in which individuals, organisations and society as a whole develop and sustain their capacities to commission, implement and make systematic use of evaluations. ECD is intended to strengthen the basic functions of evaluation in order to

contribute to good governance: improving the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes through learning within organisations, gearing policy to satisfying the needs of the population, and strengthening the legitimacy of government action.

### **International networking and cooperation on ECD**

By cooperating with regional and national evaluation societies, DEval's main aim is to promote civil-society engagement in evaluations, either bilaterally or via the international EvalPartners network that is specifically geared to civil society. Beyond this, it contributes its expertise via training courses and at national and international events. As a member of the ECD Task Team of OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), DEval presents its work to the international donor community and helps to shape the task team's work processes. ■



**Dr Stefanie Krapp**  
Sociologist,  
Head of Department  
at DEval

Interview



## ➔ **The added value of Evaluation Capacity Development in Costa Rica**

Since 2014, DEval has been assisting the Government of Costa Rica in setting up a national evaluation system. DEval Team Leader Erwin Geuder-Jilg spoke about this partnership with the FOCEVAL project with Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo, Minister of Planning of Costa Rica, and Professor Jörg Faust, Director of DEval.

### **Why do you want to strengthen evaluation practice in Costa Rica?**

**Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo:** Evaluation is explicitly enshrined in Costa Rica's constitution. Our Government considers it a fundamental steering instrument for improving the efficiency of state institutions, as demanded by the Costa Rican people. To do this, it is important for policy-makers and the public service to have the required evaluation capacities. Working together with FOCEVAL and DEval offers us an excellent opportunity to further develop and strengthen these capacities.

### **How did DEval come to work with Costa Rica's Government?**

**Jörg Faust:** We believe that strengthening evaluation systems is an important tool for strengthening good governance and helping to consolidate democracies based on the rule of law. The German cooperation system has a long-standing tradition of devoting great attention to good governance topics. For us, this was a very good opportunity to work with Costa Rica as a regional anchor of stability and democracy in its efforts to develop an evaluation system.

### **What specific aims are you pursuing with the FOCEVAL project?**

**Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo:** One of our aims is to establish evaluation as a new governance tool. Besides this, we want to strengthen institutional evaluation capacities and make greater use of evaluations in decision-making processes, for monitoring and creating transparency. Our final goal is to set up a national evaluation community with the involvement of the various actors.





**Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo**  
Minister of Planning, Costa Rica



**Professor Jörg Faust**  
Director of DEval

### **And what are DEval's objectives?**

**Jörg Faust:** Our most important aim is to support the different actors in setting up an evaluation system and thereby strengthen the effectiveness of state action in a democratic context. Apart from that, through this support DEval wants to highlight the advantages of an integrated, systemic approach that involves public institutions, academia, civil society and parliament in equal measure.

### **Are initial results visible yet?**

**Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo:** They certainly are. We have set up a national platform in which actors from the state, civil society, parliament and academia are working together to promote evaluation processes. We are well on track to institutionalising evaluation and consolidating the evaluation unit at the Ministry of Planning, which is driving forward evaluation processes in some of the country's other institutions. The first evaluation agenda for 2015 to 2018 will soon be implemented, and institutions that have experience with evaluation are already using it. And we expect a national evaluation policy to be adopted soon.

### **What conclusions do you draw from the Evaluation Capacity Development project in general?**

**Jörg Faust:** The results stated by the Minister could not have been achieved without the motivation and interest shown by the Government of Costa Rica and other stakeholders. This was a crucial factor for FOCEVAL's success. Beyond this, we believe that the focus on bringing together different actors and involving them in a national evaluation system is the right approach for improving the project's sustainability.

### **What next steps are planned?**

**Olga Marta Sánchez Oviedo:** To start, the national evaluation policy is to be published, since there will be a change of government in just a few months' time. We want to leave behind an improved process for developing an evaluation agenda that the new government can use to continue with evaluation. At regional level, we want to shape dialogue processes and carry out joint projects with other Latin American countries with which we share a forum for the 2030 Agenda. This involves working together in the field of evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals and developing international scope for action in this respect with support from FOCEVAL and DEval.

### **What prospects does the future hold for German development cooperation in the field of ECD, especially as regards the Sustainable Development Goals?**

**Jörg Faust:** Given the current international situation, I also consider it important for German cooperation to maintain its focus on promoting democracy and the rule of law. Strengthening evaluation capacities may be an innovative and effective tool in this context, especially if we pursue a systemic approach. One challenge will be to transfer the good experience gained in Costa Rica to other countries with more difficult framework conditions. Triangular cooperation might be an appropriate form of cooperation in these countries. Another linchpin for strengthening evaluation capacities, of course, is the 2030 Agenda, whose complex system of targets and indicators presents the international community with enormous monitoring and evaluation challenges. ■

## FOCEVAL: strengthening evaluation in Costa Rica

DEval is focusing its involvement in building evaluation capacities in the partner countries of German development cooperation on the Fomento de Capacidades en Evaluación (FOCEVAL) project, which promotes evaluation capacities in Costa Rica and other Latin American countries.

GIZ carried out the first phase of the project from 2011 to mid-2014. After that, DEval assumed responsibility on the German side. The project is already in its third phase, in which the success achieved so far is being consolidated and disseminated.

### FOCEVAL has already achieved a lot

FOCEVAL operates at the individual, institutional and societal levels. For example, it supports the Ministry of Planning of Costa Rica in developing a national evaluation policy and advises parliament on how it can make greater use of evaluations in its work. This has made it possible to strengthen evaluation processes and structures in Costa Rica so that the national evaluation agenda can be successfully implemented.

A participatory evaluation was piloted in 2016 in which civil society assumed an active role as part of the evaluation team. Appropriate course formats were developed to provide various target groups (particularly

evaluation experts, managers and commissioning parties of evaluations) with initial and continuing training.

Actors with an interest in evaluation from government and civil society and from the research sector use Costa Rica's national evaluation platform to exchange information and to set up interinstitutional working groups for implementing activities.

### Dissemination in Latin America

Together with international networks and partners in other countries of the region, the project disseminates a variety of learning and advisory products such as training programmes on evaluation topics, as well as a blended learning course on evaluation and on evaluation standards in Latin America. It also advises evaluation units in these countries and supports the development of evaluation manuals. A regional evaluation platform provides a forum for sharing experiences.

### On the finishing straight

By the end of 2018, the project intends to do more than just strengthen evaluation systems in Costa Rica and other Latin American countries. It is also providing targeted support to young, up-and-coming evaluators. Another focus is on involving civil society in the evaluation of governmental programmes.

DEval is processing the experience it has gathered throughout the project term so that it can benefit from experience with the FOCEVAL project and allow others to benefit too. The conclusions drawn are intended to provide key inputs for an overarching ECD strategy for German development cooperation. ■



FOCEVAL  
(Fomento de Capacidades  
en Evaluación)  
Commissioned by: BMZ  
Partner: Ministry of  
Planning and Economic  
Policy of Costa Rica  
(MIDEPLAN) Term of  
phase III: 2017 – 2018



Erwin Geuder-Jilg  
Agricultural scientist,  
DEval Team Leader







## Forums for knowledge-sharing and joint learning

Evaluations not only create knowledge as an important basis for an effective and sustainable development policy. They are themselves underpinned by sectoral and methodological knowledge, without which they cannot make evidence-based statements.

DEval works to ensure that the different evaluation actors share this knowledge and exchange information. In so doing, they not only take a critical look at their evaluation practice, they develop it further and strengthen their evaluation capacities.

Policy-makers, who are among those targeted by DEval's work, require different information than civil society, though. The academic and research community, in turn, is interested in different details than the implementing organisations. DEval therefore offers various formats for disseminating

### Brown bag lunches

Renowned experts present their work to DEval staff and other interested parties.

information that are always geared to the specific target group.

### Exchange with academia

Cooperation arrangements with academic institutions in Germany and abroad are intended to enhance the quality of DEval's work and disseminate its findings more widely within sectoral discourse. For example, DEval has carried out a study on how German development cooperation organisations are perceived in their partner countries, in conjunction with AidData at the College of William & Mary in the USA. Together with the Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA), DEval is working on a literature study on refugee crises and development cooperation. A cooperation arrangement with the Aid Attitudes Tracker of University College London forms the basis for a study on the German public's attitudes towards development cooperation and sustainable development.

DEval also organises conferences, frequently together with partners. For example, the institute co-hosted a conference entitled 'Evidence on a Silver Platter: Evaluation Results for Policy Making in Development Cooperation', which was held in Berlin in November 2015, together with the evaluation units of the ministries of foreign affairs and development cooperation of Belgium and the Netherlands. In March 2017, DEval hosted the annual meeting of the directors of members of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) in Bonn. And in November 2016, an intense

### For students

Students have an opportunity to acquire basic evaluation know-how at regular lecture series run in cooperation with the University of Bonn.

discussion on rigorous impact evaluations took place at a conference jointly organised with the University of Mannheim and the BMZ.

### Joint learning in development cooperation

Exchange with other German development cooperation actors and international development partners helps to pool existing evaluation knowledge, and to further develop and professionalise evaluations and their methodologies. DEval has established appropriate information and exchange forums for this purpose.

In Germany, DEval specifically targets political actors such as members of the German Parliament's Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development and its staff, and raises their awareness of the purpose and benefits of evaluations. At a workshop in October 2016, DEval discussed the methodological challenges to be tackled in the area of hard-to-measure results with members of the Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid Non-Governmental Organisations (VENRO).

DEval also forges international networks. At the invitation of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, a DEval team conducted methodological training with the Finnish development cooperation evaluation community in 2016. Such events pool the evaluation know-how that has been obtained, and in so doing help to further develop methodologies and professionalise evaluation within development cooperation. ■

#### Development cooperation lectures

DEval and the BMZ introduce new staff to the topic of evaluation at half-day workshops.

#### DEval in dialogue

The findings of current DEval evaluations and their policy implications are presented and discussed.

“

**Evaluations can only offer added value for development cooperation if academia, evaluation entities, policy-makers and practitioners all pull together. That's why dialogue with these partners is so vital.**

”

Dr Martin Noltze and Dr Lena Hohfeld



**Dr Martin Noltze**  
Agricultural economist,  
DEval Team Leader

**Dr Lena Hohfeld**  
Economist,  
DEval evaluator





**OUTLOOK:  
INCREASING  
EFFECTIVENESS.**

# Outlook: Increasing effectiveness.

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As an external evaluation has shown, the institutional innovation that is DEval has found its place within German development policy.

Now that DEval has **successfully completed** its start-up phase, in future we want to lend greater visibility to the lessons we have learned. Together with the German Parliament, Government, civil society and the research and academic community, we are continuing our independent evaluation programme. DEval will go on presenting strategically relevant evaluation findings in the future. We also want to take a closer look at whether and how our recommendations are acted on. ➡

➔ New national and international **partner-ships** and networks enhance the quality of evaluations, both in Germany and among its partners.

## The next five years: programme and strategy

The declared aim of development cooperation is to 'work itself out of a job' in the long term. In a setting that is subject to dynamic change and fraught with insecurity, this goal can only be achieved if the development cooperation system regularly stands up to critical analysis and uses the empirical findings of this analysis to improve its own effectiveness, cost-efficiency and sustainability. This will also make it possible to maintain or even improve the public acceptance and political legitimacy of the policy field in the medium term.

Five years after its creation, DEval has proved that it can make a key contribution to institutionalising this type of critical reflection within the German development cooperation landscape. The innovation of an independent evaluation institute that is simultaneously closely integrated into German development cooperation has been placed on a solid footing.

Over the coming years, our aim is to further consolidate the institute, but especially to achieve greater impact in terms of promoting a healthy degree of self-criticism within the development cooperation system, and in so doing to firmly establish DEval as a reference institute for scientifically sound evaluation work that is of equal strategic and political relevance. We will continue to support German development cooperation actors in finding answers to the challenges

posed by sustainable global development, and in putting these answers into concrete practice.

### **Fragility and conflict**

Fragility, crisis prevention and peacebuilding are becoming increasingly important issues within development cooperation. This complex is also one of the priority areas of DEval's work. We are currently conducting an evaluation to examine the effectiveness of German development interventions in the context of conflict-induced displacement and forced migration. We will also evaluate how German development cooperation is strengthening the rights of women and girls in their frequently highly precarious situation in fragile contexts, and how it is improving their circumstances. At the overarching level, we will assess the evaluations already available on this subject to produce an evaluation synthesis, and will collate existing knowledge on the effectiveness of development cooperation in fragile contexts shaped by conflict into a thematic priority area report.

### **Sustainability and human rights**

The Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda have made sustainability one of the key priorities within German development cooperation. Sustainability is therefore the second priority area for DEval in the years to come. For us, sustainability means more than just ensuring that the results of development interventions will last after support has been discontinued. Our focus is rather on a broader understanding of sustainability as set out in the 2030 Agenda. This spells out the need to harmonise environmental, economic and social aspects.

A meta-evaluation is critically assessing sustainability ratings in evaluations of German financial and technical cooperation. This aims to make recommendations for evaluation practices related to sustainability within the context of the 2030 Agenda, and at the same time to gain insights into sustainability within German development

cooperation by synthesising all of the available evaluations. We are simultaneously working on approaches to give greater consideration to sustainability aspects when planning and assessing programmes and country portfolios.

A further point where our evaluations relate to the 2030 Agenda is the 'leave no one behind' principle. We are planning to conduct an evaluation on the contribution made by German development cooperation to gender equality in fragile contexts. Our evaluation of the BMZ Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, which is due to be published before the end of 2017, also shows our interest in implementing this principle. Both evaluations also ask how German development cooperation reconciles its objectives with human rights obligations.

### **Development education in Germany**

By establishing Engagement Global, the German Government created an independent organisation that promotes global civic engagement and development education. DEval will examine how Engagement Global acts as an interface between the BMZ and civil society. The ongoing evaluation of the weltwärts volunteer programme is also helping to gain a better understanding of how to promote civil-society involvement and development education.

Since support from a wider public is essential if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we will also present a study on attitudes to development cooperation and sustainable development in Germany, which is intended to provide development cooperation actors with information and guidance as regards the public attitude towards these issues.

### **Enhancing partnership**

The international declarations on development cooperation are placing growing emphasis on the

“

**DEval intends to carve out a permanent place for itself as a reference institute for the scientifically sound evaluation of development cooperation that is both strategically and politically relevant.**

”

DEval-strategy 2017 – 2021

importance of partnership. This includes both cooperation within bilateral official development cooperation and the involvement of new governmental, private sector and civil-society actors.

DEval addresses three perspectives in this context:

Firstly, we are taking a closer look at the assessments of development partners and will present an analysis of the extent to which partners in developing countries perceive German development cooperation actors as reliable partners with the relevant expertise. This unbiased look at how German development cooperation ‘comes across’ makes it possible to build on existing strengths and systematically remedy any deficits.

Secondly, DEval will respond to suggestions from the German Parliament and the BMZ to evaluate triangular cooperation arrangements. These involve Germany cooperating with emerging economies so as to provide financial and personnel support to other developing countries. Since cooperation with private sector actors is also becoming increasingly important, we will evaluate cooperation with the private sector in the agricultural sector and the mobilisation of private capital through the establishment of structured finance funds.

Finally, DEval’s activities in the area of evaluation capacity development help to strengthen evaluation capacities in the partner countries of German development cooperation, with the ultimate aim of promoting good governance.

#### Strategy from 2017 to 2021

In order to continue strengthening DEval in the role it plays for development cooperation, our action between 2017 and 2021 will be guided by a strategy entitled ‘independent, impact-oriented, research-based’. The design of this strategy was informed in part by the recommendations of external experts that were recently formulated in a successfully completed independent evaluation of the institute.

#### independent

We are part of the German development cooperation system yet at the same time an independent and impartial evaluation institute. To further strengthen this role – the first of its kind on a global scale – existing regulations need to be further developed. Our reports are accessible to the public without restrictions.

#### impact-oriented

Our evaluations are designed to have a practical impact within the development cooperation system. With this aim in mind, we will continue to structure the evaluation process and make it even more transparent for everyone involved. We intend to invest greater effort into communicating our findings, supporting implementation of recommendations and examining the impact of these recommendations in an implementation monitoring process. Key questions do not stop at the boundaries between different ministries. With the support of our Advisory Board, we will do our part to ensure that joint evaluations involving different government departments are facilitated to a greater extent than before.

#### research-based

The scientific quality of our work is the foundation for our credibility. We intend to reinforce our methodological research and incorporate our evaluation findings to a greater extent into scientific discourse. We also want to make greater use in our evaluations of new data sources such as satellite data.

In times when fake news and conspiracy theories hold sway, independent, high-quality evaluations are more important than ever as a means of objectifying discourse and finding viable solutions. Together with our partners, we assume this role and responsibility. ■







## ➔ Facts and figures

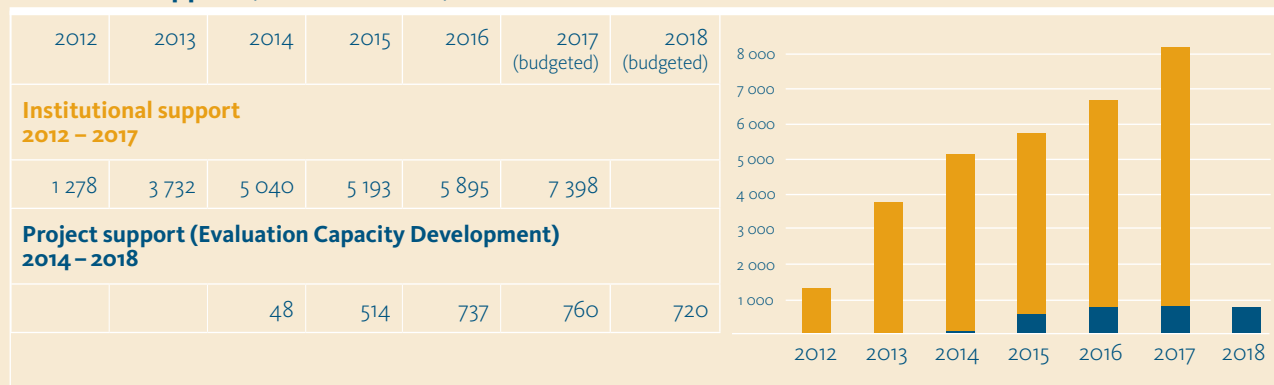
### Staff members\*

	06/2012	12/2012	12/2013	12/2014	12/2015	12/2016	06/2017
Management level and heads of departments	1	4	4	4	6	6	6
Senior evaluators and team leaders	–	2	5	7	8	10	10,7
of which number of positions funded from programme funds	–	–	–	–	1	2	2
Evaluators	–	7	14,7	16,9	12,9	16,44	20,05
of which number of positions funded from programme funds	–	0,5	6,05	8,45	5,25	11	12,8
Project administration	–	–	2,75	2,75	2,65	3,9	2,9
Administration (incl. public relations)	2,8	4,5	9,8	11,9	11,9	12,2	13,05
<b>Project Evaluation Capacity Development</b>							
Team leaders	–	–	–	–	1	1	1
Evaluators	–	–	0,5	1	1	1	2
Project assistants	–	–	–	0,5	0,5	1,5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,8</b>	<b>17,5</b>	<b>36,75</b>	<b>44,05</b>	<b>43,95</b>	<b>52,04</b>	<b>56,7</b>
of which number of academic and research staff**	–	11	22,2	26,9	26,9	32,44	37,75
Interns	–	–	–	–	3	4	2
Students	–	–	0,9	1,8	1,7	6,3	5,9

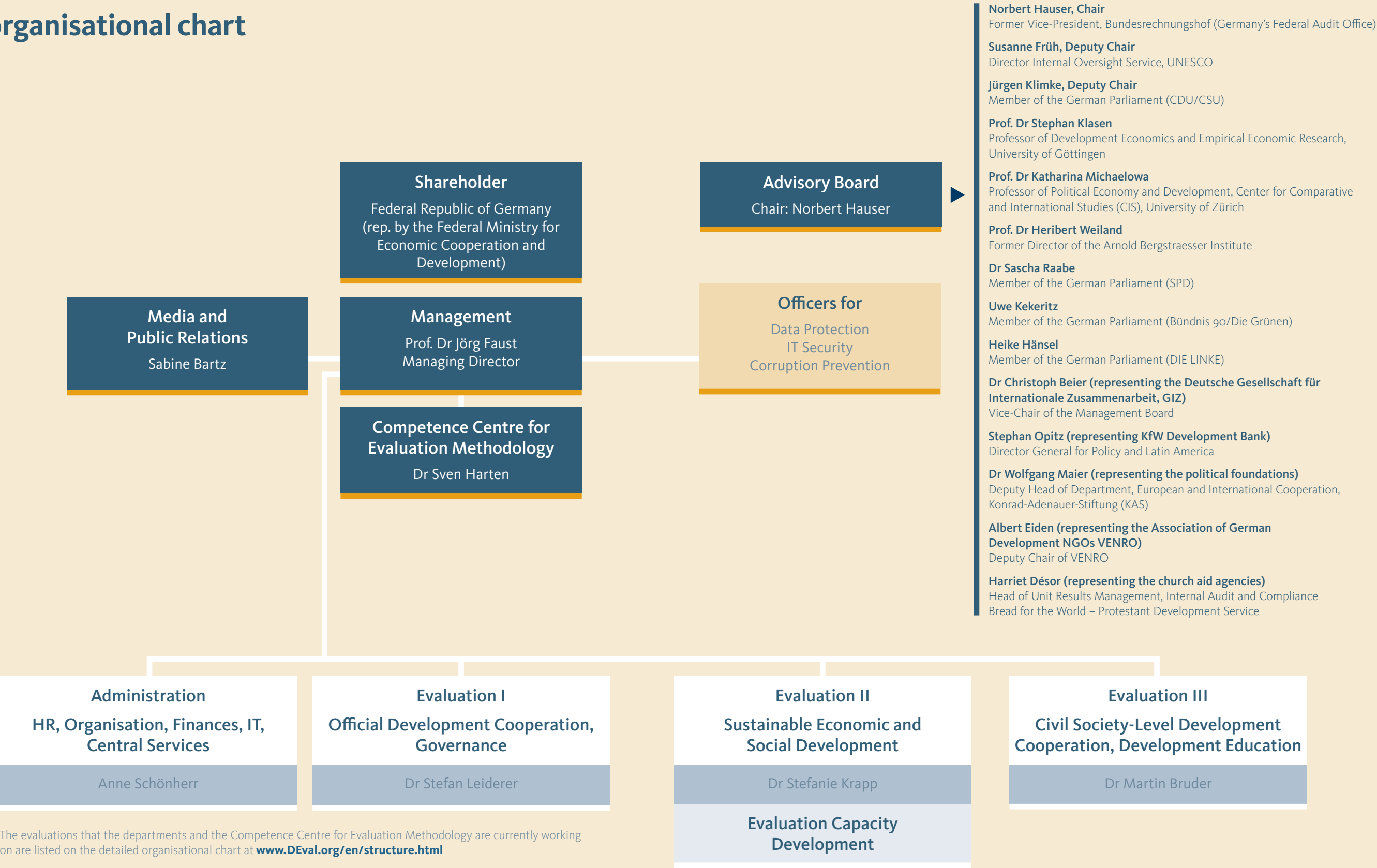
\* in full-time equivalents

\*\* This includes (senior) evaluators, team leaders and heads of evaluation departments and of the Competence Centre for Evaluation Methodology.

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➞ DEval organisational chart



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### Imagery

The full-page images throughout the report depict different  
snapshots from the regions and different areas in which  
DEval works.

